

I am a heritage because I
bring you years of thought
and the lore of time —
I impart yet I can not speak —
I have traveled among the
peoples of the earth — I
am a rover — Oft-times
I stray from the fireside
of the one who loves and
cherishes me — who
misses me when I am
gone — Should you find
me vagrant please send
me home — among my
brothers — on the book
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THE
WANDERING JEW

BY

EUGENE SUE

*WITH ONE HUNDRED AND EIGHTY-TWO ILLUSTRATIONS FROM DESIGNS
BY A. FERDINANDUS*

IN THREE VOLUMES

VOL. III

GEORGE ROUTLEDGE AND SONS
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By JOSEPH L. BEAMER.



MARSHAL SIMON AND HIS DAUGHTERS.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

VOLUME III

PART VI—THE CHOLERA

CHAP. I. THE WANDERER	1
II. THE LUNCHEON	6
III. RENDERING THE ACCOUNT	15
IV. THE SQUARE OF NÔTRE-DAME	29
V. THE CHOLERA MASQUERADE	38
VI. THE DEFLANCE	43
VII. BRANDY TO THE RESCUE	49
VIII. MEMORIES	55
IX. THE POISONER	62
X. IN THE CATHEDRAL	71
XI. THE MURDERERS	77
XII. THE WALK	85
XIII. THE PATIENT	92
XIV. THE SNARE	99
XV. GOOD NEWS	107
XVI. THE SECRET NOTE	113
XVII. THE OPERATION	116
XVIII. THE TORTURE	123
XIX. VICE AND VIRTUE	128
XX. SUICIDE	136
XXI. CONFESSIONS	144
XXII. MORE CONFESSIONS	153
XXIII. THE RIVALS	159
XXIV. THE INTERVIEW	166
XXV. SOOTHING WORDS	175
XXVI. THE TWO CARRIAGES	183
XXVII. THE APPOINTMENT	193
XXVIII. ANXIETY	202
XXIX. ADRIENNE AND DJALMA	205

CHAP. XXX. "THE IMITATION"	212
XXXI. THE VISIT	219
XXXII. AGRICOLA BAUDOIN	230
XXXIII. THE HIDING-PLACE	239
XXXIV. A TRUE CHRISTIAN PRIEST	242
XXXV. THE CONFESSOR	248
XXXVI. THE VISIT	255
XXXVII. PRAYER	261
XXXVIII. REMEMBRANCES	272
XXXIX. THE BLOCKHEAD	277
XL. THE ANONYMOUS LETTERS	283
XLI. THE GOLDEN CITY	291
XLII. THE STUNG LION	298
XLIII. THE TEST	305
XLIV. THE RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST	312
XLV. THE CALVARY	316
XLVI. THE COUNCIL	319
XLVII. HAPPINESS	331
XLVIII. DUTY	339
XLIX. THE COLLECTION	347
L. THE IMPROVISED HOSPITAL	357
LI. HYDROPHOBIA	363
LII. THE GUARDIAN ANGEL	371
LIII. RUIN	377
LIV. MEMORIES	385
LV. THE ORDEAL	392
LVI. AMBITION	398
LVII. TO A SOCIUS, A SOCIUS AND A HALF	405
LVIII. MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE	408
LIX. FARINGHEA'S LOVES	414
LX. AN EVENING AT SAINTE-COLOMBE'S	422
LXI. THE NUPTIAL BED	430
LXII. A DUEL TO THE DEATH	439
LXIII. A MESSAGE	448
LXIV. THE FIRST OF JUNE	453

EPILOGUE

CHAP. I. FOUR YEARS AFTER	465
II. THE REDEMPTION	469
CONCLUSION	474

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOLUME III

MARSHAL SIMON AND HIS DAUGHTERS	ix
OH! WHAT A DELICIOUS DREAM	xv
GO ON! GO ON! GO ON!	9
RELIGIOUS CONSOLATIONS	17
RODIN ATTACKED WITH THE CHOLERA	25
THE CHURCH-YARD	33
THE CHOLERA MASQUERADE	41
MOTHER AND BABE	51
THE DUEL WITH BRANDY	57
GOLIATH FACING THE MOB	65
GOLIATH THROWN IN THE RIVER	73
MEMBERS OF THE BROTHERHOOD	81
GABRIEL AND THE CARDINAL	89
THE PONTIFICAL THRONE	97
YOUR CRAFT IS NO MATCH—FOR MY AGONY	105
THE DESTRUCTION OF M. HARDY'S FACTORY	115
DR. BALEINIER'S OPERATION	121
VICE AND VIRTUE	129
CEPHYSE AND MOTHER BUNCH	137
THE UNHAPPY GIRL THROWS HERSELF FROM THE WINDOW	145
CONFESSIONS	155
THE RIVAL	161
DJALMA AND ROSE-POMPON	169
PHILEMON'S RETURN	177
AGRICOLA AND MOTHER BUNCH	185
THE JEW AND THE COFFIN	195
AN ENCHANTING VISION	201
OUR HAPPINESS WILL BE STRONGER THAN THEIR HATE	209
THE "IMITATION OF CHRIST"	217

M. HARDY VISITED BY HIS FACTORY OPERATIVES	225
AGRICOLA BAUDOIN AND FATHER D'AIGRIGNY	233
THE HIDING-PLACE	241
GABRIEL AND M. HARDY	249
THE CONSPIRATORS	257
MARSHAL SIMON AND THE KING OF ROME	265
DAGOBERT AND "LOONY"	273
THE ANONYMOUS LETTER	281
MARSHAL SIMON	289
HERODIAS, THE WANDERING JEWESS	297
GABRIEL IN THE CHOLERA HOSPITALS	307
DAGOBERT AND THE ORPHANS	313
RODIN AND DAGOBERT	321
THE PRINCESS DE SAINT-DIZIER'S VISIT	329
MADAME AUGUSTINE'S DEATH	337
MOROK'S MADNESS	345
DEATH OF ROSE AND BLANCHE SIMON	353
ADRIENNE AND THE PRINCESS DE SAINT-DIZIER	361
HE LISTENED WITH PASSIONATE ATTENTION	369
THE GUARDIAN ANGEL	379
FATHER CABOCINI	387
MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE	395
FARINGHEA GUIDING DJALMA	403
DJALMA'S REVENGE	409
THE NUPTIAL BED	417
A DUEL TO THE DEATH	425
THE POISONED BRUSH	433
RODIN CONFRONTED WITH HIS VICTIMS	441
MY HEART IS LIFTED TO GOD WITH A SENTIMENT OF INEFFABLE GRATITUDE	449
THE DIVINE REDEMPTION	471



OH! WHAT A DELICIOUS DREAM.

THE WANDERING JEW

PART VI

THE CHOLERA

CHAPTER I

THE WANDERER



It is night. The moon shines and the stars glimmer in the midst of a serene but cheerless sky; the sharp whistlings of the north-wind, that fatal, dry, and icy breeze, ever and anon burst forth in violent gusts. With its harsh and cutting breath, it sweeps Montmartre's Heights.

On the highest point of the hills a man is standing. His long shadow is cast upon the stony, moon-lit ground. He gazes on the immense city, which lies outspread beneath his feet. PARIS, with the dark outline of its towers, cupolas, domes, and steeples, standing out from the limpid blue of the horizon, while from the midst of the ocean of masonry rises a luminous vapor that reddens the starry azure of the sky. It is the distant reflection of the thousand fires which at night, the hour of pleasures, light up so joyously the noisy capital.

"No," said the wayfarer; "it is not to be. The Lord will not exact it. Is not *twice* enough?"

"Five centuries ago the avenging hand of the Almighty drove me hither from the uttermost confines of Asia. A solitary traveler, I had left behind me more grief, despair, disaster, and death than the innumerable armies of a hundred devastating conquerors. I entered this town, and it too was decimated.

"Again, two centuries ago, the inexorable hand which leads me through the world brought me once more hither; and then, as the time before, the plague, which the Almighty attaches to my steps, again ravaged this city, and fell first on my brethren, already worn out with labor and misery.

"My brethren—mine—the cobbler of Jerusalem, the artisan accursed by the Lord, who, in my person, condemned the whole race of workmen, ever suffering, ever disinherited, ever in slavery, toiling on like me without rest or pause, without recompense or hope, till men, women, and children, young and old, all die beneath the same iron yoke—that murderous yoke, which others take in their turn, thus to be borne from age to age on the submissive and bruised shoulders of the masses.

"And now, for the third time in five centuries, I reach the summit of one of the hills that overlook the city. And perhaps I again bring with me fear, desolation, and death. Yet this city, intoxicated with the sounds of its joys and its nocturnal revelries, does not know—oh! does not know that *I* am at its gates. But no, no! my presence will not be a new calamity. The Lord, in his impenetrable views, has hitherto led me through France so as to avoid the humblest hamlet; and the sound of the funeral knell has not accompanied my passage. And, moreover, the specter has left me—the green, livid specter, with its hollow, blood-shot eyes. When I touched the soil of France, its damp and icy hand was no longer clasped in mine—and it disappeared.

"And yet, I feel that the atmosphere of death is around me. The sharp whistlings of that fatal wind cease not, which, catching me in their whirl, seem to propagate blasting and mildew as they blow. But perhaps the wrath of the Lord is appeased, and my presence here is only a threat—to be communicated in some way to those whom it should intimidate. Yes; for otherwise he would smite with a fearful blow, by first scattering terror and death here in the heart of the country, in the bosom of this immense city. Oh! no, no! the Lord will be merciful. No! he will not condemn me to this new torture.

"Alas! in this city, my brethren are more numerous and miserable than elsewhere. And should I be their messenger of death?"

"No! the Lord will have pity. For, alas! the seven descendants of

my sister have at length met in this town. And to them likewise should I be the messenger of death, instead of the help they so much need?"

"For that woman, who like me wanders from one border of the earth to the other, after having once more rent asunder the nets of their enemies, has gone forth upon her endless journey. In vain she foresaw that new misfortunes threatened my sister's family. The invisible hand, that drives me on, drives *her* on also. Carried away, as of old, by the irresistible whirlwind, at the moment of leaving my kindred to their fate, she in vain cried with supplicating tone:

" 'Let me at least, oh, Lord, complete my task!'

" 'Go on!'

" 'A few days, in mercy; only a few poor days!'

" 'Go on!'

" 'I leave those I love on the brink of the abyss!'

" 'Go on! Go on!'

"And the wandering star again started on its eternal round. And her voice, passing through space, called me to the assistance of mine own.

"When the voice reached me, I knew that the descendants of my sister were still exposed to frightful perils. Those perils are even now on the increase.

"Tell me, oh, Lord! will they escape the scourge, which for so many centuries has weighed down our race? Wilt thou pardon me in them? Wilt thou punish me in them? Oh, that they might obey the last will of their ancestor! Oh, that they might join together their charitable hearts, their valor and their strength, their noble intelligence, and their great riches. They would then labor for the future happiness of humanity—they would thus, perhaps, redeem me from my eternal punishment!

"The words of the Son of Man, 'LOVE YE ONE ANOTHER,' will be their only end, their only means. By the help of those all-powerful words, they will fight and conquer the false priests, who have renounced the precepts of love, peace, and hope for lessons of hatred, violence, and despair.

"Those false priests, who, kept in pay by the powerful and happy of this world, their accomplices in every age, instead of asking here below for some slight share of well-being for my unfortunate brethren, dare in thy name, oh, Lord God, to assert that the poor are condemned to endless suffering in this world—and that the desire or the hope to suffer less is a crime in thine eyes—because the *happiness of the few and the misery of nearly the whole human race* is (oh, blasphemy!) according to thy will. Is not the very contrary of those murderous words alone worthy of divinity?

"In mercy, hear me, Lord! Rescue from their enemies the descendants of my sister—the artisan as the king's son. Do not let them destroy the germ of so mighty and fruitful an association, which, with thy blessing, would make an epoch in the annals of human happiness.

"Let me unite them, oh, Lord, since others would divide them; defend them, since others attack; let me give hope to those who have ceased to hope, courage to those who are brought low with fear; let me raise up the falling and sustain those who persevere in the way of the righteous!

"And, peradventure, their struggles, devotion, virtue, and grief may expiate my fault—that of a man whom misfortune alone rendered unjust and wicked.

"Oh! since thy Almighty hand hath led me hither,—to what end I know not,—lay aside thy wrath, I beseech thee; let me be no longer the instrument of thy vengeance! Enough of woe upon the earth! For the last two years thy creatures have fallen by thousands upon my track. The world is decimated. A veil of mourning extends over all the globe. From Asia to the icy pole, they died upon the path of the wanderer. Dost thou not hear the long-drawn sigh that rises from the earth unto thee, oh, Lord? Mercy for all! mercy for me! Let me but unite the descendants of my sister for a single day, and they will be saved!"

As he pronounced these words, the wayfarer sank upon his knees and raised to heaven his supplicating hands.

Suddenly the wind blew with redoubled violence; its sharp whistlings were changed into the roar of a tempest.

The traveler shuddered; in a voice of terror he exclaimed:

"The blast of death rises in its fury—the whirlwind carries me on—Lord! thou art then deaf to my prayer? The specter! oh, the specter! it is again here! its green face twitching with convulsive spasms; its red eyes rolling in their orbits. Begone! begone!—its hand, oh! its icy hand has again laid hold of mine. Have mercy, Heaven!"

"Go on!"

"Oh, Lord! the pestilence—the terrible plague—must I carry it into this city? And my brethren will perish the first—they, who are so sorely smitten even now! Mercy!"

"Go on!"

"And the descendants of my sister. Mercy! Mercy!"

"Go on!"

"Oh, Lord, have pity! I can no longer keep my ground; the specter drags me to the slope of the hill; my walk is rapid as the deadly blast

that rages behind me ; already do I behold the city gates. Have mercy, Lord, on the descendants of my sister ! Spare them ; do not make me their executioner ; let them triumph over their enemies ! ”

“ GO ON ! GO ON ! ”

“ The ground flies beneath my feet ; there is the city gate. Lord, it is yet time ! Oh, mercy for that sleeping town ! Let it not waken to cries of terror, despair, and death ! Lord, I am on the threshold. Must it be ?—Yes, it is done. Paris, the plague is in thy bosom. The curse—oh, the eternal curse ! ”

“ GO ON ! GO ON ! GO ON ! ”

CHAPTER II

THE LUNCHEON

THE morning after the doomed traveler, descending the heights of Montmartre, had entered the walls of Paris, great activity reigned in the Hotel House. Though it was hardly noon, the Princess de Saint-Dizier, without being exactly in full dress (she had too much taste for that), was yet arrayed with more care than usual. Her light hair, instead of being merely banded, was arranged in two bunches of curls, which suited very well with her full and florid cheeks. Her cap was trimmed with bright rose-colored ribbon, and whoever had seen the lady in her tight-fitting dress of gray watered silk would have easily guessed that Madame Grivois, her fire-woman, must have required the assistance and the efforts of another of the princess's women to achieve so remarkable a reduction in the ample figure of their mistress.

We shall explain the edifying cause of this partial return to the vanities of the world. The princess, attended by Madame Grivois, who acted as housekeeper, was giving her final orders with regard to some preparations that were going on in a vast parlor. In the midst of this room was a large round table, covered with crimson velvet, and near it stood several chairs, amongst which, in the place of honor, was an arm-chair of gilded wood. In one corner, not far from the chimney, in which burned an excellent fire, was a buffet. On it were the divers materials for a most dainty and exquisite collation. Upon silver dishes were piled pyramids of sandwiches, composed of the roes of carp and anchovy paste, with slices of pickled tunny-fish and Perigord truffles (it was in Lent); on silver dishes, placed over burning spirits of wine, so as to keep them very hot, tails of Meuse craw-fish, boiled in cream, smoked in golden-colored pastry, and seemed to challenge comparison with delicious little Marennes oyster-patties, stewed in Madeira, and flavored with a seasoning of spiced sturgeon. By the side of these substantial dishes were some of a lighter character, such as pineapple tarts,

strawberry-creams (it was early for such fruit), and orange-jelly served in the peel, which had been artistically emptied for that purpose. Bordeaux, Madeira, and Alicante sparkled like rubies and topazes in large glass decanters, while two Sèvres ewers were filled, one with coffee *à la crème*, the other with vanilla chocolate, almost in the state of sherbet, from being plunged in a large cooler of chiseled silver, containing ice.

But what gave to this dainty collation a singularly apostolic and papal character were sundry symbols of religious worship carefully represented. Thus there were charming little Calvaries in apricot paste, sacerdotal miters in burnt almonds, episcopal croziers in sweet cake, to which the princess added, as a mark of delicate attention, a little cardinal's hat in cherry sweetmeat, ornamented with bands in burnt sugar. The most important, however, of these Catholic delicacies, the masterpiece of the cook, was a superb crucifix in angelica, with a crown of candied berries.

These are strange profanations, which scandalize even the least devout. But, from the impudent juggle of the coat of Triers, down to the shameless jest of the shrine at Argenteuil, people who are pious after the fashion of the princess seem to take delight in bringing ridicule upon the most respectable traditions.

After glancing with an air of satisfaction at these preparations for the collation, the lady said to Madame Grivois, as she pointed to the gilded arm-chair, which seemed destined for the president of the meeting :

"Is there a cushion under the table, for his eminence to rest his feet on? He always complains of cold."

"Yes, madame," said Madame Grivois, when she had looked under the table; "the cushion is there."

"Let also a tin bottle be filled with boiling water, in case his eminence should not find the cushion enough to keep his feet warm."

"Yes, madame."

"And put some more wood on the fire."

"But, my lady, it is already a very furnace. And if his eminence is always too cold, my lord the Bishop of Halfagen is always too hot. He perspires dreadfully."

The princess shrugged her shoulders, and said :

"Is not his eminence Cardinal Malipieri the superior of his lordship the Bishop of Halfagen?"

"Yes, madame."

"Then, according to the rules of the hierarchy, it is for his lordship to suffer from the heat, rather than his eminence from the cold. Therefore, do as I tell you, and put more wood on the fire. Nothing is more

natural; his eminence being an Italian and his lordship coming from the north of Belgium, they are accustomed to different temperatures."

"Just as madame pleases," said Madame Grivois, as she placed two enormous logs on the fire; "but in such a heat as there is here his lordship might really be suffocated."

"I also find it too warm; but does not our holy religion teach us lessons of self-sacrifice and mortification?" said the princess, with a touching expression of devotion.

We have now explained the cause of the rather gay attire of the princess. She was preparing for a reception of prelates, who, along with Father d'Aigrigny and other dignitaries of the church, had already held at the princely house a sort of council on a small scale. A young bride who gives her first ball, an emancipated minor who gives his first bachelor's dinner, a woman of talent who reads aloud for the first time her first unpublished work, are not more joyous and proud, and at the same time more attentive to their guests, than was this lady with her prelates. To behold great interests discussed in her house, and in her presence, to hear men of acknowledged ability ask her advice upon certain practical matters relating to the influence of female congregations, filled the princess with pride, as her claims to consideration were thus sanctioned by lordships and eminences, and she took the position, as it were, of a mother of the church. Therefore, to win these prelates, whether native or foreign, she had recourse to no end of saintly flatteries and sanctified coaxing. Nor could anything be more logical than these successive transfigurations of this heartless woman, who only loved sincerely and passionately the pursuit of intrigue and domination. With the progress of age, she passed naturally from the intrigues of love to those of politics, and from the latter to those of religion.

At the moment she finished inspecting her preparations, the sound of coaches was heard in the court-yard, apprising her of the arrival of the persons she had been expecting. Doubtless these persons were of the highest rank, for, contrary to all custom, she went to receive them at the door of her outer saloon.

It was, indeed, Cardinal Malipieri, who was always cold, with the Belgian Bishop of Hallegu, who was always hot. They were accompanied by Father d'Aigrigny. The Roman cardinal was a tall man, rather bony than thin, with a yellowish, puffy countenance, haughty and full of craft; he squinted a good deal, and his black eyes were surrounded by a deep brown circle. The Belgian bishop was short, thick, and fat, with a prominent abdomen, an apoplectic complexion, a slow, deliberate look, and a soft, dimpled, delicate hand.

The company soon assembled in the great saloon. The cardinal

instantly crept close to the fire, while the bishop, beginning to sweat and blow, cast longing glances at the iced chocolate and coffee, which were to aid him in sustaining the oppressive heat of the artificial dog-day.



Father d'Aigrigny, approaching the princess, said to her in a low voice :

“ Will you give orders for the admittance of Abbé Gabriel de Remepont, when he arrives ? ”

"Is that young priest then here?" asked the princess, with extreme surprise.

"Since the day before yesterday. We had him summoned to Paris by his superiors. You shall know all. As for Father Rodin, let Madame Grivois admit him, as the other day, by the little door of the backstairs."

"He will come to-day?"

"He has very important matters to communicate. He desired that both the cardinal and the bishop should be present, for they have been informed of everything at Rome by the Superior-General, in their quality of associates."

The princess rang the bell, gave the necessary orders, and, returning toward the cardinal, said to him, in a tone of the most earnest solicitude:

"Does your eminence begin to feel a little warmer? Would your eminence like a bottle of hot water to your feet? Shall we make a larger fire for your eminence?"

At this proposition the Belgian bishop, who was wiping the perspiration from his forehead, heaved a despairing sigh.

"A thousand thanks, princess," answered the cardinal to her in very good French, but with an intolerable Italian accent; "I am really overcome with so much kindness."

"Will not your lordship take some refreshment?" said the princess to the bishop, as she turned toward the sideboard.

"With your permission, madame, I will take a little iced coffee," said the prelate, making a prudent circuit to approach the dishes without passing before the fire.

"And will not your eminence try one of these little oyster-patties? They are quite hot," said the princess.

"I know them already, princess," said the cardinal, with the air and look of an epicure; "they are delicious, and I cannot resist the temptation."

"What wine shall I have the honor to offer your eminence?" resumed the princess graciously.

"A little claret, if you please, madame." And as Father d'Aigrigny prepared to fill the cardinal's glass, the princess disputed with him that pleasure.

"Your eminence will doubtless approve what I have done," said Father d'Aigrigny to the cardinal, while the latter was gravely dispatching the oyster-patties, "in not summoning for to-day the Bishop of Mogador, the Archbishop of Nanterre, and our holy Mother Sainte-Perpétue, the lady-superior of St. Mary's Convent, the interview we are

about to have with his reverence, Father Rodin, and Abbé Gabriel being altogether private and confidential."

"Our good father was perfectly right," said the cardinal; "for, though the possible consequences of this Rennepont affair may interest the whole church, there are some things that are as well kept secret."

"Then I must seize this opportunity to thank your eminence for having deigned to make an exception in favor of a very obscure and humble servant of the church," said the princess to the cardinal, with a very deep and respectful courtesy.

"It is only just and right, madame," replied the cardinal, bowing, as he replaced his empty glass upon the table; "we know how much the church is indebted to you for the salutary direction you give to the religious institutions of which you are the patroness."

"With regard to that, your eminence may be assured that I always refuse assistance to any poor person who cannot produce a certificate from the confessional."

"And it is only thus, madame," resumed the cardinal, this time allowing himself to be tempted by the attractions of the craw-fish's tails, "it is only thus that charity has any meaning. I care little that the irreligious should feel hunger, but with the pious it is different." And the prelate gayly swallowed a mouthful. "Moreover," resumed he, "it is well known with what ardent zeal you pursue the impious and those who are rebels against the authority of our holy father."

"Your eminence may feel convinced that I am *Roman* in heart and soul; I see no difference between a Gallican and a Turk," said the princess bravely.

"The princess is right," said the Belgian bishop; "I will go farther, and assert that a Gallican should be more odious to the church than a pagan. In this respect I am of the opinion of Louis XIV. They asked him a favor for a man about the court. 'Never,' said the great king; 'this person is a Jansenist.'—'No, sire; he is an atheist!'—'Oh! that is different; I will grant what he asks,' said the king."

This little episcopal jest made them all laugh. After which Father d'Aigrigny resumed seriously, addressing the cardinal:

"Unfortunately, as I was about to observe to your eminence with regard to the Abbé Gabriel, unless they are very narrowly watched, the lower clergy have a tendency to become infected with dissenting views, and with ideas of rebellion against what they call the despotism of the bishops."

"This young man must be a Catholic Luther!" said the bishop. And, walking on tip-toe, he went to pour himself out a glorious glass of Madeira, in which he soaked some sweet cake, made in the form of a crozier.

Led by his example, the cardinal, under pretense of warming his feet by drawing still closer to the fire, helped himself to an excellent glass of old Malaga, which he swallowed by mouthfuls, with an air of profound meditation ; after which he resumed :

“ So this Abbé Gabriel starts as a reformer. He must be an ambitious man. Is he dangerous ? ”

“ By our advice his superiors have judged him to be so. They have ordered him to come hither. He will soon be here, and I will tell your eminence why I have sent for him. But first, I have a note on the dangerous tendencies of the Abbé Gabriel. Certain questions were addressed to him, with regard to some of his acts, and it was in consequence of his answers that his superiors recalled him.”

So saying, Father d'Aigrigny took from his pocket-book a paper, which he read as follows :

“ ‘ Question.—Is it true that you performed religious rites for an inhabitant of your parish who died in final impenitence of the most detestable kind, since he had committed suicide ?

“ ‘ Answer of Abbé Gabriel.—*I paid him the last duties, because, more than any one else because of his guilty end, he required the prayers of the church. During the night which followed his interment, I continually implored for him the divine mercy.*

“ ‘ Question.—Is it true that you refused a set of silver-gilt sacramental vessels, and other ornaments, with which one of the faithful, in pious zeal, wished to endow your parish ?

“ ‘ Answer.—*I refused the vessels and embellishments, because the house of the Lord should be plain and without ornament, so as to remind the faithful that the divine Saviour was born in a stable. I advised the person who wished to make these useless presents to my parish to employ the money in judicious alms-giving, assuring him it would be more agreeable to the Lord.’ ”*

“ What a bitter and violent declamation against the adorning of our temples ! ” cried the cardinal. “ This young priest is most dangerous. Continue, my good father.”

And, in his indignation, his eminence swallowed several mouthfuls of strawberry-cream. Father d'Aigrigny continued :

“ ‘ Question.—Is it true that you received in your parsonage, and kept there for some days, an inhabitant of the village, by birth a Swiss, belonging to the Protestant communion ? Is it true that not only did you not attempt to convert him to the one Catholic and Apostolic faith, but that you carried so far the neglect of your sacred duties as to inter this heretic in the ground consecrated for the repose of true believers ?

“ ‘ Answer.—*One of my brethren was houseless. His life had been honest and laborious. In his old age his strength had failed him, and sickness had come at the back of it ; almost in a dying state, he had been driven from his humble dwelling by a pitiless landlord, to whom he owed a year's rent. I received the old man in my house, and soothed his last days. The poor creature had toiled and suffered all his life ; dying, he uttered no word of bitterness at his hard fate ; he recommended his soul to God, and piously kissed the crucifix. His pure and simple spirit returned to the bosom of its Creator. I closed his eyes with respect, I buried him, I prayed for him ; and, though he died in the Protestant faith, I thought him worthy of a place in consecrated ground.’ ”*

"Worse and worse!" said the cardinal. "This tolerance is monstrous. It is a horrible attack on that maxim of Catholicism: '*Out of the pale of the Church there is no salvation.*'"

"And all this is the more serious, my lord," resumed Father d'Aigrigny, "because the mildness, charity, and Christian devotion of Abbé Gabriel have excited, not only in his parish, but in all the surrounding districts, the greatest enthusiasm. The priests of the neighboring parishes have yielded to the general impulse, and it must be confessed that but for his moderation a widespread schism would have commenced."

"But what do you hope will result from bringing him here?" said the prelate.

"The position of Abbé Gabriel is complicated; first of all, he is the heir of the Rennepont family."

"But has he not ceded his rights?" asked the cardinal.

"Yes, my lord; and this cession, which was at first informal, has lately, with his free consent, been made perfectly regular in law; for he had sworn, happen what might, to renounce his part of the inheritance in favor of the Society of Jesus. Nevertheless, his reverence Father Rodin thinks that if your eminence, after explaining to Abbé Gabriel that he was about to be recalled by his superiors, were to propose to him some eminent position at Rome, he might be induced to leave France, and we might succeed in arousing within him those sentiments of ambition which are doubtless only sleeping for the present; your eminence having observed, very judiciously, that every reformer must be ambitious."

"I approve of this idea," said the cardinal, after a moment's reflection; "with his merit and power of acting on other men, Abbé Gabriel may rise very high, if he is docile; and if he should not be so, it is better for the safety of the church that he should be at Rome than here — for you know, my good father, we have securities that are unfortunately wanting in France."

After some moments of silence, the cardinal said suddenly to Father d'Aigrigny:

"As we were talking of Father Rodin, tell me frankly what you think of him."

"Your eminence knows his capacity," said Father d'Aigrigny, with a constrained and suspicious air; "our reverend Father-General —"

"Commissioned him to take your place," said the cardinal: "I know that. He told me so at Rome. But what do you think of the character of Father Rodin? Can one have full confidence in him?"

"He has so complete, so original, so secret, and so impenetrable a

mind," said Father d'Aigrigny, with hesitation, "that it is difficult to form any certain judgment with respect to him."

"Do you think him ambitious?" said the cardinal after another moment's pause. "Do you not suppose him capable of having other views than those of the greater glory of his Order?—Come, I have reasons for speaking thus," added the prelate, with emphasis.

"Why," resumed Father d'Aigrigny, not without suspicion, for the game is played cautiously between people of the same craft, "what should your eminence think of him, either from your own observation or from the report of the Father-General?"

"I think—that if his apparent devotion to his Order really concealed some after-thought—it would be well to discover it, for, with the influence that he has obtained at Rome (as I have found out), he might one day, and that shortly, become very formidable."

"Well!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, impelled by his jealousy of Rodin; "I am, in this respect, of the same opinion as your eminence; for I have sometimes perceived in him flashes of ambition that were as alarming as they were extraordinary—and since I must tell all to your eminence——"

Father d'Aigrigny was unable to continue; at this moment Madame Grivois, who had been knocking at the door, half opened it and made a sign to her mistress.

The princess answered by bowing her head, and Madame Grivois again withdrew.

A second afterward Rodin entered the room.

CHAPTER III

RENDERING THE ACCOUNT



AT sight of Rodin, the two prelates and Father d'Aigrigny rose spontaneously, so much were they overawed by the real superiority of this man; their faces, just before contracted with suspicion and jealousy, suddenly brightened up, and seemed to smile on the reverend father with affectionate deference. The princess advanced some steps to meet him.

Rodin, badly dressed as ever, leaving on the soft carpet the muddy track of his clumsy shoes, put his umbrella into one corner and advanced toward the table—not with his accustomed humility, but with slow step, uplifted head, and steady glance; not only did he feel himself in the midst of his partisans, but he knew that he could rule them all by the power of his intellect.

“We were speaking of your reverence, my dear, good father,” said the cardinal, with charming affability.

“Ah!” said Rodin, looking fixedly at the prelate; “and what were you saying?”

“Why,” replied the Belgian bishop, wiping his forehead, “all the good that can be said of your reverence.”

“Will you not take something, my good father?” said the princess to Rodin, as she pointed to the splendid sideboard.

“Thank you, madame, I have eaten my radish already this morning.”

“My secretary, Abbé Berlini, who was present at your repast, was, indeed, much astonished at your reverence’s frugality,” said the prelate; “it is worthy of an anchorite.”

“Suppose we talk of business,” said Rodin abruptly, like a man accustomed to lead and control the discussion.

“We shall always be most happy to hear you,” said the prelate. “Your reverence yourself fixed to-day to talk over this great Rennepont affair. It is of such importance, that it was partly the cause of my journey to France; for to support the interests of the glorious Com-

pany of Jesus, with which I have the honor of being associated, is to support the interests of Rome itself, and I promised the reverend Father-General that I would place myself entirely at your orders."

"I can only repeat what his eminence has just said," added the bishop. "We set out from Rome together, and our ideas are just the same."

"Certainly," said Rodin, addressing the cardinal, "your eminence may serve our cause, and that materially. I will tell you how presently."

Then, addressing the princess, he continued:

"I have desired Dr. Baleinier to come here, madame, for it will be well to inform him of certain things."

"He will be admitted as usual," said the princess.

Since Rodin's arrival Father d'Aigrigny had remained silent; he seemed occupied with bitter thoughts and with some violent internal struggle. At last, half rising, he said to the prelate in a forced tone of voice:

"I will not ask your eminence to judge between the reverend Father Rodin and myself. Our general has pronounced, and I have obeyed. But as your eminence will soon see our superior, I should wish that you would grant me the favor to report faithfully the answers of Father Rodin to one or two questions I am about to put to him."

The prelate bowed.

Rodin looked at Father d'Aigrigny with an air of surprise, and said to him dryly:

"The thing is decided. What is the use of questions?"

"Not to justify myself," answered Father d'Aigrigny, "but to place matters in their true light before his eminence."

"Speak, then; but let us have no useless speeches," said Rodin, drawing out his large silver watch and looking at it. "By two o'clock I must be at Saint-Sulpice."

"I will be as brief as possible," said Father d'Aigrigny, with repressed resentment. Then, addressing Rodin, he resumed:

"When your reverence thought fit to take my place and to blame, very severely perhaps, the manner in which I had managed the interests confided to my care, I confess honestly that these interests were gravely compromised."

"Compromised?" said Rodin ironically; "you mean lost. Did you not order me to write to Rome to bid them renounce all hope?"

"That is true," said Father d'Aigrigny.

"It was then a desperate case, given up by the best doctors," continued Rodin, with irony, "and yet I have undertaken to restore it to life. Go on."

And plunging both hands into the pockets of his trousers, he looked Father d'Aigrigny full in the face.

"Your reverence blamed me harshly," resumed Father d'Aigrigny.



"not for having sought by every possible means to recover the property odiously diverted from our society ——"

"All your casuists authorize you to do so," said the cardinal; "the

texts are clear and positive; you have a right to recover, *per fas aut nefas*, what has been treacherously taken from you."

"And therefore," resumed Father d'Aigrigny, "Father Rodin only reproached me with the military roughness of my means. 'Their violence,' he said, 'was in dangerous opposition to the manners of the age.' Be it so; but, first of all, I could not be exposed to any legal proceedings, and, but for one fatal circumstance, success would have crowned the course I had taken, however rough and brutal it may appear. Now, may I ask your reverence, what ——"

"What I have done more than you?" said Rodin to Father d'Aigrigny, giving way to his impertinent habit of interrupting people; "what I have done better than you? what step I have taken in the Rennepont affair since I received it from you in a desperate condition? Is that what you wish to know?"

"Precisely," said Father d'Aigrigny dryly.

"Well, I confess," resumed Rodin in a sardonic tone, "just as you did great things, coarse things, turbulent things, I have been doing little, puerile, secret things. Oh, Heaven! you cannot imagine what a foolish part I, who passed for a man of enlarged views, have been acting for the last six weeks."

"I should never have allowed myself to address such a reproach to your reverence, however deserved it may appear," said Father d'Aigrigny, with a bitter smile.

"A reproach?" said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders; "a reproach? You shall be the judge. Do you know what I wrote about you, some six weeks ago? Here it is: 'Father d'Aigrigny has excellent qualities. He will be of much service to me,'—and from to-morrow I shall employ you very actively," added Rodin, by way of parenthesis,—"'but he is not great enough to know how to make himself little on occasion.' Do you understand?"

"Not very well," said Father d'Aigrigny, blushing.

"So much the worse for you," answered Rodin; "it only proves that I was right. Well, since I must tell you, I have been wise enough to play the most foolish part for six whole weeks. Yes, I have chatted nonsense with a grisette—have talked of liberty, progress, humanity, emancipation of woman, with a young, excited girl; of Napoleon the Great, and all sorts of Bonapartist idolatry, with an old, imbecile soldier; of imperial glory, humiliation of France, hopes in the King of Rome, with a certain marshal of France, who, with a heart full of adoration for the robber of thrones, that was transported to Saint-Helena, has a head as hollow and sonorous as a trumpet, into which you have only to blow some warlike or patriotic notes, and it will flourish away

of itself, without knowing why or how. More than all this, I have talked of love affairs with a young tiger. When I told you it was lamentable to see a man of any intelligence descend, as I have done, to all such petty ways of connecting the thousand threads of this dark web, was I not right? Is it not a fine spectacle to see the spider obstinately weaving its net?—to see the ugly little black animal crossing thread upon thread, fastening it here, strengthening it there, and again lengthening it in some other place? You shrug your shoulders in pity? but return two hours after—what will you find? The little black animal eating its fill, and in its web a dozen of the foolish flies, bound so securely that the little black animal has only to choose the moment of its repast.”

As he uttered these words, Rodin smiled strangely; his eyes, gradually half closed, opened to their full width, and seemed to shine more than usual. The Jesuit felt a sort of feverish excitement, which he attributed to the contest in which he had engaged before these eminent personages, who already felt the influence of his original and cutting speech.

Father d'Aigrigny began to regret having entered on the contest. He resumed, however, with ill-repressed irony:

“I do not dispute the smallness of your means. I agree with you, they are very puerile—they are even very vulgar. But that is not quite sufficient to give an exalted notion of your merit. May I be allowed to ask——”

“What these means have produced?” resumed Rodin, with an excitement that was not usual with him. “Look into my spider’s web, and you will see there the beautiful and insolent young girl, so proud, six weeks ago, of her grace, mind, and audacity—now pale, trembling, mortally wounded at the heart.”

“But the act of chivalrous intrepidity of the Indian prince, with which all Paris is ringing,” said the princess, “must surely have touched Mademoiselle de Cardoville.”

“Yes; but I have paralyzed the effect of that stupid and savage devotion, by demonstrating to the young lady that it is not sufficient to kill black panthers to prove one’s self a susceptible, delicate, and faithful lover.”

“Be it so,” said Father d'Aigrigny; “we will admit the fact that Mademoiselle de Cardoville is wounded to the heart.”

“But what does this prove with regard to the Rennepont affair?” asked the cardinal, with curiosity, as he leaned his elbows on the table.

“There results from it,” said Rodin, “that when our most dangerous

enemy is mortally wounded, she abandons the battle-field. That is something, I should imagine."

"In fact," said the princess, "the talents and audacity of Mademoiselle de Cardoville would make her the soul of the coalition formed against us."

"Be it so," replied Father d'Aigrigny obstinately; "she may be no longer formidable in that respect. But the wound in her heart will not prevent her from inheriting."

"Who tells you so?" asked Rodin coldly, and with assurance. "Do you know why I have taken such pains, first to bring her in contact with Djalma, and then to separate her from him?"

"That is what I ask you," said Father d'Aigrigny; "how can this storm of passion prevent Mademoiselle de Cardoville and the prince from inheriting?"

"Is it from the serene or from the stormy sky that darts the destroying thunderbolt?" said Rodin disdainfully. "Be satisfied; I shall know where to place the conductor. As for M. Hardy, the man lived for three things: his workmen, his friend, his mistress. He has been thrice wounded in the heart. I always take aim at the heart; it is legal and sure."

"It is legal, and sure, and praiseworthy," said the bishop; "for, if I understand you rightly, this manufacturer had a concubine. Now, it is well to make use of an evil passion for the punishment of the wicked."

"True, quite true," added the cardinal; "if they have evil passions for us to make use of, it is their own fault."

"Our holy Mother Sainte-Perpétue," said the princess, "took every means to discover this abominable adultery."

"Well, then, M. Hardy is wounded in his dearest affections, I admit," said Father d'Aigrigny, still disputing every inch of ground; "ruined too in his fortune, which will only make him the more eager after this inheritance."

The argument appeared of weight to the two prelates and the princess: all looked at Rodin with anxious curiosity. Instead of answering, he walked up to the sideboard, and, contrary to his habits of stoical sobriety, and in spite of his repugnance for wine, he examined the decanters, and said:

"What is there in them?"

"Claret and sherry," said the hostess, much astonished at the sudden taste of Rodin, "and ——"

The latter took a decanter at hazard, and poured out a glass of Madeira, which he drank off at a draught. Just before, he had felt a strange kind of shivering; to this had succeeded a sort of weakness. He hoped the wine would revive him.

After wiping his mouth with the back of his dirty hand, he returned to the table, and said to Father d'Aigrigny :

"What did you tell me about M. Hardy ?"

"That, being ruined in fortune, he would be the more eager to obtain this immense inheritance," answered Father d'Aigrigny, inwardly much offended at the imperious tone.

"M. Hardy think of money ?" said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders. "He is indifferent to life, plunged in a stupor, from which he only starts to burst into tears. Then he speaks with mechanical kindness to those about him. I have placed him in good hands. He begins, however, to be sensible to the attentions shown him, for he is good, excellent, weak ; and it is to this excellence, Father d'Aigrigny, that you must appeal to finish the work in hand."

"I ?" said Father d'Aigrigny, much surprised.

"Yes ; and then you will find that the result I have obtained is considerable, and ——"

Rodin paused, and, pressing his hand to his forehead, said to himself : "It is strange !"

"What is the matter ?" said the princess, with interest.

"Nothing, madame," answered Rodin, with a shiver ; "it is doubtless the wine I drank ; I am not accustomed to it. I feel a slight headache ; but it will pass."

"Your eyes are very bloodshot, my good father," said the princess.

"I have looked too closely into my web," answered the Jesuit, with a sinister smile ; "and I must look again to make Father d'Aigrigny, who pretends to be blind, catch a glimpse of my other flies. The two daughters of Marshal Simon, for instance, growing sadder and more dejected every day at the icy barrier raised between them and their father ; and the latter thinking himself one day dishonored if he does this, another if he does that ; so that the hero of the empire has become weaker and more irresolute than a child. What more remains of this impious family ? Jacques Rennepont ? Ask Morok to what a state of debasement intemperance has reduced him, and toward what an abyss he is rushing !—There is my occurrence-sheet ; you see to what are reduced all the members of this family, who, six weeks ago, had each elements of strength and union ! Behold these Renneponts, who, by the will of their heretical ancestor, were to unite their forces to combat and crush our Society !—There was good reason to fear them ; but what did I say ? That I would act upon their passions. What have I done ? I have acted upon their passions. At this hour they are vainly struggling in my web—they are mine—they are mine ——"

As he was speaking, Rodin's countenance and voice had undergone

a singular alteration; his complexion, generally so cadaverous, had become flushed, but unequally, and in patches; then, strange phenomenon! his eyes grew both more brilliant and more sunken, and his voice sharper and louder. The change in the countenance of Rodin, of which he did not appear to be conscious, was so remarkable that the other actors in this scene looked at him with a sort of terror.

Deceived as to the cause of this impression, Rodin exclaimed with indignation, in a voice interrupted by deep gaspings for breath:

"Is it pity for this impious race that I read upon your faces? Pity for the young girl, who never enters a church, and erects pagan altars in her habitation? Pity for Hardy, the sentimental blasphemer, the philanthropic atheist, who had no chapel in his factory, and dared to blend the names of Socrates, Marcus Aurelius, and Plato with our Saviour's? Pity for the Indian worshiper of Brahma? Pity for the two sisters, who have never even been baptized? Pity for that brute, Jacques Rennepont? Pity for the stupid imperial soldier, who has Napoleon for his god and the bulletins of the grand army for his gospel? Pity for this family of renegades, whose ancestor, a relapsed heretic, not content with robbing us of our property, excites from his tomb, at the end of a century and a half, his cursed race to lift their heads against us? What! to defend ourselves from these vipers we shall not have the right to crush them in their own venom?—I tell you that it is to serve Heaven and to give a salutary example to the world, to devote, by unchaining their own passions, this impious family to grief and despair and death!"

As he spoke thus, Rodin was dreadful in his ferocity; the fire of his eyes became still more brilliant; his lips were dry and burning; a cold sweat bathed his temples, which could be seen throbbing; an icy shudder ran through his frame. Attributing these symptoms to fatigue from writing through a portion of the night, and wishing to avoid fainting, he went to the sideboard, filled another glass with wine, which he drank off at a draught, and returned as the cardinal said to him:

"If your course with regard to this family needed justification, my good father, your last word would have victoriously justified it. Not only are you right, according to your own casuists, but there is nothing in your proceedings contrary to human laws. As for the divine law, it is pleasing to the Lord to destroy impiety with its own weapons."

Conquered, as well as the others, by Rodin's diabolical assurance, and brought back to a kind of fearful admiration, Father d'Aigrigny said to him:

"I confess I was wrong in doubting the judgment of your reverence. Deceived by the appearance of the means employed, I could not judge

of their connection, and, above all, of their results. I now see that, thanks to you, success is no longer doubtful."

"This is an exaggeration," replied Rodin, with feverish impatience; "all these passions are at work, but the moment is critical. As the alchemist bends over the crucible, which may give him either treasures or sudden death, I alone at this moment——"

Rodin did not finish the sentence. He pressed both his hands to his forehead, with a stifled cry of pain.

"What is the matter?" said Father d'Aigrigny. "For some moments you have been growing fearfully pale."

"I do not know what is the matter," said Rodin, in an altered voice; "my headache increases—I am seized with a sort of giddiness."

"Sit down," said the princess, with interest.

"Take something," said the bishop.

"It will be nothing," said Rodin, with an effort; "I am no milksop, thank Heaven! I had little sleep last night; it is fatigue—nothing more. I was saying that I alone could now direct this affair; but I cannot execute the plan myself. I must keep out of the way and watch in the shade; I must hold the threads, which I alone can manage," added Rodin, in a faint voice.

"My good father," said the cardinal uneasily, "I assure you that you are very unwell. Your paleness is becoming livid."

"It is possible," answered Rodin courageously; "but I am not to be so soon conquered. To return to our affair—this is the time in which your qualities, Father d'Aigrigny, will turn to good account. I have never denied them, and they may now be of the greatest use. You have the power of charming—grace—eloquence—you must——"

Rodin paused again. A cold sweat poured from his forehead. He felt his legs give way under him, notwithstanding his obstinate energy.

"I confess I am not well," he said; "yet, this morning, I was as well as ever. I shiver. I am icy cold."

"Draw near the fire; it is a sudden indisposition," said the bishop, offering his arm with heroic devotion; "it will not be anything of consequence."

"If you were to take something warm—a cup of tea," said the princess. "Dr. Baleinier will be here directly; he will re-assure us as to this—indisposition."

"It is really inexplicable," said the prelate.

At these words of the cardinal, Rodin, who had advanced with difficulty toward the fire, turned his eyes upon the prelate and looked at him fixedly in a strange manner, for about a second; then, strong in his unconquerable energy, notwithstanding the change in his features,

which were now visibly disfigured, Rodin said in a broken voice, which he tried to make firm :

"The fire has warmed me ; it will be nothing. I have no time to coddle myself. It would be a pretty thing to fall ill just as the Rennepont affair can only succeed by my exertions ! Let us return to business. I told you, Father d'Aigrigny, that you might serve us a good deal ; and you also, princess, who have espoused this cause as if it were your own —— "

"Rodin again paused. This time he uttered a piercing cry, sank upon a chair placed near him, and, throwing himself back convulsively, he pressed his hands to his chest, and exclaimed :

"Oh ! what pain ! "

Then (dreadful sight !) a cadaverous decomposition, rapid as thought, took place in Rodin's features. His hollow eyes were filled with blood, and seemed to shrink back in their orbits, which formed, as it were, two dark holes, in the center of which blazed points of fire ; nervous convulsions drew the flabby, damp, and icy skin tight over the bony prominences of the face, which was becoming rapidly green. From the lips, writhing with pain, issued the struggling breath, mingled with the words :

"Oh ! I suffer ! I burn ! "

Then, yielding to a transport of fury, Rodin tore with his nails his naked chest, for he had twisted off the buttons of his waistcoat, and rent his black and filthy shirt-front, as if the pressure of those garments augmented the violence of the pain under which he was writhing. The bishop, the cardinal, and Father d'Aigrigny hastily approached Rodin, to try and hold him ; he was seized with horrible convulsions ; but, suddenly, collecting all his strength, he rose upon his feet stiff as a corpse. Then, with his garments in disorder, his thin gray hair standing up all around his greenish face, fixing his red and flaming eyes upon the cardinal, he seized him with convulsive grasp and exclaimed in a terrible voice, half stifled in his throat :

"Cardinal Malipieri — this illness is too sudden — they suspect me at Rome — you are of the race of the Borgias — and your secretary was with me this morning ! "

"Unhappy man ! what does he dare insinuate ? " cried the prelate, as amazed as he was indignant at the accusation.

So saying, the cardinal strove to free himself from the grasp of Rodin, whose fingers were now as stiff as iron.

"I am poisoned ! " muttered Rodin ; and sinking back, he fell into the arms of Father d'Aigrigny.

Notwithstanding his alarm, the cardinal had time to whisper to the latter :



RODIN ATTACKED WITH THE CHOLERA.

"He thinks himself poisoned. He must therefore be plotting something very dangerous."

The door of the room opened. It was Dr. Baleinier.

"Oh, doctor!" cried the princess, as she ran pale and frightened toward him; "Father Rodin has been suddenly attacked with terrible convulsions. Quick! quick!"

"Convulsions? oh! it will be nothing, madame," said the doctor, throwing down his hat upon a chair and hastily approaching the group which surrounded the sick man.

"Here is the doctor!" cried the princess.

All stepped aside, except Father d'Aigrigny, who continued to support Rodin, leaning against a chair.

"Heavens! what symptoms!" cried Dr. Baleinier, examining with growing terror the countenance of Rodin, which from green was turning blue.

"What is it?" asked all the spectators, with one voice.

"What is it?" repeated the doctor, drawing back as if he had trodden upon a serpent. "It is the cholera! and contagious!"

On this frightful, magic word, Father d'Aigrigny abandoned his hold of Rodin, who rolled upon the floor.

"He is lost!" cried Dr. Baleinier. "But I will run to fetch the means for a last effort."

And he rushed toward the door.

The Princess de Saint-Dizier, Father d'Aigrigny, the bishop, and the cardinal followed in terror the flight of Dr. Baleinier. They all pressed to the door, which, in their consternation, they could not open.

It opened at last, but from without, and Gabriel appeared upon the threshold,—Gabriel, the type of the true priest, the holy, the evangelical minister, to whom we can never pay enough of respect and ardent sympathy and tender admiration. His angelic countenance, in its mild serenity, offered a striking contrast to these faces, all disturbed and contracted with terror.

The young priest was nearly thrown down by the fugitives, who rushed through the now open doorway, exclaiming:

"Do not go in! he is dying of the cholera. Fly!"

On these words, pushing back the bishop, who, being the last, was trying to force a passage, Gabriel ran toward Rodin, while the prelate succeeded in making his escape.

Rodin, stretched upon the carpet, his limbs twisted with fearful cramps, was writhing in the extremity of pain. The violence of his fall had, no doubt, roused him to consciousness, for he moaned in a sepulchral voice:

"They leave me to die — like a dog — the cowards! Help! — no one ——"

And the dying man, rolling on his back with a convulsive movement, turned toward the ceiling a face on which was branded the infernal despair of the damned, as he once more repeated:

"No one! — not one!"

His eyes, which suddenly flamed with fury, just then met the large blue eyes of the angelic and mild countenance of Gabriel, who, kneeling beside him, said to him, in his soft, grave tones:

"I am here, father — to help you, if help be possible — to pray for you, if God calls you to him."

"Gabriel!" murmured Rodin with failing voice; "forgive me for the evil I have done you — do not leave me — do not ——"

Rodin could not finish; he had succeeded in raising himself into a sitting posture; he now uttered a loud cry, and fell back without sense or motion.

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The same day it was announced in the evening papers:

"The cholera has broken out in Paris. The first case declared itself this day, at half-past three P. M., in the Rue de Babylone, at the Hotel Saint-Dizier."

CHAPTER IV

THE SQUARE OF NOTRE-DAME



WEEK had passed since Rodin was seized with the cholera, and its ravages had continually increased.

That was an awful time! A funeral pall was spread over Paris, once so gay. And yet, never had the sky been of a more settled, purer blue; never had the sun shone more brilliantly. The inexorable serenity of nature during the ravages of the deadly scourge offered a strange and mysterious contrast. The flaunting light of the dazzling sunshine fell full upon the features contracted by a thousand agonizing fears. Each trembled for himself or for those dear to him; every countenance was stamped with an expression of feverish astonishment and dread. People walked with rapid steps, as if they would escape from the fate which threatened them; besides, they were in haste to return to their homes, for often they left life, health, happiness, and two hours later they found agony, death, and despair.

At every moment new, dismal objects met the view. Sometimes carts passed along filled with coffins symmetrically piled; they stopped before every house. Men in black and gray garments were in waiting before the door; they held out their hands, and to some one coffin was thrown, to some two, frequently three or four, from the same house. It sometimes happened that the store was quickly exhausted, and the cart, which had arrived full, went away empty, while many of the dead in the street were still unserved. In nearly every dwelling, upstairs and down, from the roof to the cellar, there was a stunning tapping of hammers; coffins were being nailed down, and so many, so very many were nailed, that sometimes those who worked stopped from sheer fatigue. Then broke forth laments, heartrending moans, despairing imprecations. They were uttered by those from whom the men in black and gray had taken some one to fill the coffins.

Unceasingly were the coffins filled, and day and night did those men work, but by day more than by night, for, as soon as it was dusk, came

a gloomy file of vehicles of all kinds — the usual hearses were not sufficient; but cars, carts, drays, hackney-coaches, and such like swelled the funeral procession; different to the other conveyances, which entered the streets full and went away empty, these came empty but soon returned full.

During that period the windows of many houses were illuminated, and often the lights remained burning till the morning. It was "the season." These illuminations resembled the gleaming rays which shine in the gay haunts of pleasure; but there were tapers instead of wax candles, and the chanting of prayers for the dead replaced the murmur of the ball-room. In the streets, instead of the facetious transparencies which indicate the costumers, there swung at intervals huge lanterns of a blood-red color, with these words in black letters:

"ASSISTANCE FOR THOSE ATTACKED WITH THE CHOLERA."

The true places for revelry, during the night, were the church-yards; they ran riot — they, usually so desolate and silent, during the dark, quiet hours, when the cypress-trees rustle in the breeze, so lonely that no human step dared to disturb the solemn silence which reigned there at night, became on a sudden animated, noisy, riotous, and resplendent with light. By the smoky flame of torches, which threw a red glare upon the dark fir-trees and the white tombstones, many grave-diggers worked merrily, humming snatches of some favorite tune. Their laborious and hazardous industry then commanded a very high price; they were in such request that it was necessary to humor them. They drank often and much; they sang long and loud; and this to keep up their strength and spirits good, absolute requisites in such an employment. If by chance any did not finish the grave he had begun, some obliging comrade finished it for *him* (fitting expression!), and placed him in it with friendly care.

Other distant sounds responded to the joyous strains of the grave-diggers; public-houses had sprung up in the neighborhood of the church-yards, and the drivers of the dead, when they had "*set down their customers*," as they jocosely expressed themselves, enriched with their unusual gratuities, feasted and made merry like lords; dawn often found them with a glass in their hands and a jest on their lips; and, strange to say, among these funeral satellites, who breathed the very atmosphere of the disease, the mortality was scarcely perceptible.

In the dark, squalid quarters of the town, where, surrounded by infectious exhalations, the indigent population was crowded together, and miserable beings, exhausted by severe privation, were "bespoke" by the cholera, as it was energetically said at the time, not only indi-

viduals, but whole families were carried off in a few hours; and yet, sometimes, oh, merciful Providence! one or two little children were left in the cold and empty room, after father and mother, brother and sister, had been taken away in their shells. Frequently houses which had swarmed with hard-working laborers were obliged to be shut up for want of tenants; in one day they had been completely cleared by this terrible visitation, from the cellars, where little chimney-sweepers slept upon straw, to the garret, on whose cold brick floor lay stretched some wan and half-naked being, without work and without bread.

But, of all the wards of Paris, that which perhaps presented the most frightful spectacle during the progress of the cholera was the Cité, and in the Cité, the square before the cathedral of Nôtre-Dame was almost every day the theater of dreadful scenes; for this locality was frequently thronged with those who conveyed the sick from the neighboring streets to the Hotel-Dieu.

The cholera had not one aspect, but a thousand. So that one week after Rodin had been suddenly attacked, several events combining the horrible and the grotesque occurred in the square of Nôtre-Dame.

Instead of the Rue d'Arcole, which now leads directly to the square, it was then approached on one side by a mean, narrow lane, like all the other streets of the Cité, and terminating in a dark, low archway. Upon entering the square, the principal door of the huge cathedral was to the left of the spectator, and facing him were the hospital buildings. A little beyond was an opening which gave to view a portion of the parapet of the Quai Nôtre-Dame.

A placard had been recently stuck on the discolored and sunken wall of the archway; it contained these words, traced in large characters:

"Vengeance! Vengeance!"

"The Working-men carried to the Hospitals are poisoned, because the number of Patients is too great; every night Boats filled with Corpses drop down the Seine.

"Vengeance and death to the murderers of the People!"

Two men, enveloped in cloaks, and half hidden in the deep shadow of the vault, were listening with anxious curiosity to the threatening murmur, which rose with increasing force from among a tumultuous assembly, grouped around the hospital. Soon cries of "*Death to the doctors!—Vengeance!*" reached the ears of the persons who were in ambush under the arch.

"The posters are working," said one; "the train is on fire. When once the populace is roused, we can set them on whom we please."

"I say," replied the other man, "look over there. That hercules,

whose athletic form towers above the mob, was one of the most frantic leaders when M. Hardy's factory was destroyed."

"To be sure he was; I know him again. Wherever mischief is to be done, you are sure to find those vagabonds."

"Now, take my advice, do not let us remain under this archway," said the other man; "the wind is as cold as ice, and though I am cased in flannel ——"

"You are right; the cholera is confoundedly impolite. Besides, everything is going on well here; I am likewise assured that the whole of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine is ready to rise in the republican cause; that will serve our ends, and our holy religion will triumph over revolutionary impiety. Let us rejoin Father d'Aigrigny."

"Where shall we find him?"

"Near here, come — come."

The two hastily disappeared.

The sun, beginning to decline, shed its golden rays upon the blackened sculptures of the porch of Nôtre-Dame and upon its two massy towers, rising in imposing majesty against a perfectly blue sky, for during the last few days a north-east wind, dry and cold, had driven away the lightest cloud.

A considerable number of people, as we have already stated, obstructed the approach to the hospital; they crowded round the iron railings that protect the front of the building, behind which was stationed a detachment of infantry, the cries of "*Death to the doctors!*" becoming every moment more threatening. The people who thus vociferated belonged to an idle, vagabond, and depraved populace — the dregs of the Paris mob; and (terrible spectacle!) the unfortunate beings who were forcibly carried through the midst of these hideous groups entered the hospital, while the air resounded with hoarse clamors and cries of "Death."

Every moment fresh victims were brought along in litters and on stretchers; the litters were frequently furnished with coarse curtains, and thus the sick occupants were concealed from the public gaze; but the stretchers having no covering, the convulsive movements of the dying patients often thrust aside the sheets and exposed to view their faces, livid as corpses. Far from inspiring with terror the wretches assembled round the hospital, such spectacles became to them the signal for savage jests, and atrocious predictions upon the fate of these poor creatures when once in the power of the doctors.

The big quarryman and Ciboule, with a good many of their adherents, were among the mob. After the destruction of Hardy's factory the quarryman was formally expelled from the union of the *Wolres*, who

would have nothing more to do with this wretch; since then he had plunged into the grossest debauchery, and, speculating on his herculean strength, had hired himself as the officious champion of Ciboule and her compeers.



With the exception, therefore, of some chance passengers, the square of Nôtre-Dame was filled with a ragged crowd, composed of the refuse of the Parisian populace — wretches who call for pity as well as blame :

for misery, ignorance, and destitution beget but too fatally vice and crime. These savages of civilization felt neither pity, improvement, nor terror at the shocking sights with which they were surrounded; careless of a life which was a daily struggle against hunger or the allurements of guilt, they braved the pestilence with infernal audacity, or sank under it with blasphemy on their lips.

The tall form of the quarryman was conspicuous amongst the rest; with inflamed eyes and swollen features, he yelled at the top of his voice:

"Death to the body-snatchers! they poison the people."

"That is easier than to feed them," added Ciboule. Then addressing herself to an old man, who was being carried with great difficulty through the dense crowd upon a chair by two men, the hag continued:

"Hey! don't go in there, old croaker; die here in the open air, instead of dying in that den, where you'll be doctored like an old rat."

"Yes," added the quarryman; "and then they'll throw you into the water to feast the fishes, which you won't swallow any more."

At these atrocious cries, the old man looked wildly around and uttered faint groans. Ciboule wished to stop the persons who were carrying him, and they had much difficulty in getting rid of the hag.

The number of cholera-patients arriving increased every moment, and soon neither litters nor stretchers could be obtained, so that they were borne along in the arms of the attendants.

Several awful episodes bore witness to the startling rapidity of the infection. Two men were carrying a stretcher covered with a blood-stained sheet; one of them suddenly felt himself attacked with the complaint; he stopped short, his powerless arms let go the stretcher; he turned pale, staggered, fell upon the patient, becoming as livid as him; the other man, struck with terror, fled precipitately, leaving his companion and the dying man in the midst of the crowd. Some drew back in horror; others burst into a savage laugh.

"The horses have taken fright," said the quarryman, "and have left the turn-out in the lurch."

"Help!" cried the dying man, with a despairing accent; "for pity's sake, take me in."

"There's no more room in the pit," said one, in a jeering tone.

"And you've no legs left to reach the gallery," added another.

The sick man made an effort to rise; but his strength failed him: he fell back exhausted on the mattress. A sudden movement took place among the crowd, the stretcher was overturned, the old man and his companion were trodden under foot, and their groans were drowned in the cries of:

“Death to the body-snatchers!”

The yells were renewed with fresh fury, but the ferocious band, who respected nothing in their savage fury, were soon after obliged to open their ranks to several workmen, who vigorously cleared the way for two of their friends carrying in their arms a poor artisan. He was still young, but his heavy and already livid head hung down upon the shoulder of one of them. A little child followed, sobbing, and holding by one of the workmen's coats. The measured and sonorous sound of several drums was now heard at a distance in the winding streets of the city; they were beating the call to arms, for sedition was rife in the Faubourg Saint-Antoine. The drummers emerged from under the archway, and were traversing the square, when one of them, a gray-haired veteran, suddenly slackened the rolling of his drum and stood still: his companions turned round in surprise — he had turned green; his legs gave way, he stammered some unintelligible words, and had fallen upon the pavement before those in the front rank had time to pause. The overwhelming rapidity of this attack startled for a moment the most hardened among the surrounding spectators; for, wondering at the interruption, a part of the crowd had rushed toward the drummers.

At sight of the dying man, supported in the arms of two of his comrades, one of the individuals who, concealed under the arch, had watched the beginning of the popular excitement, said to the drummers:

“Your comrade drank, perhaps, at some fountain on the road?”

“Yes, sir,” replied one; “he was very thirsty; he drank two mouthfuls of water on the Place du Châtelet.”

“Then he is poisoned,” said the man.

“Poisoned?” cried several voices.

“It is not surprising,” replied the man, in a mysterious tone; “poison is thrown into the public fountains; and this very morning a man was massacred in the Rue Beaubourg who was discovered emptying a paper of arsenic into a pot of wine at a public-house.”

Having said these words, the man disappeared in the crowd.

This report, no less absurd than the tales about the poisoning of the hospital patients, was received with a general burst of indignation. Five or six ragged beings, regular ruffians, seized the body of the expiring drummer, hoisted it upon their shoulders, in spite of all the efforts of his comrades to prevent them, and paraded the square exhibiting the dismal trophy. Ciboule and the quarryman went before, crying:

“Make way for the corpse! This is how they poison the people!”

A fresh incident now attracted the attention of the crowd. A travelling-carriage, which had not been able to pass along the Quai-Napoleon, the pavement of which was up, had ventured among the intricate

streets of the city, and now arrived in the square of Nôtre-Dame on its way to the other side of the Seine. Like many others, its owners were flying from Paris to escape the pestilence which decimated it. A man servant and a lady's-maid were in the rumble, and they exchanged a glance of alarm as they passed the hospital, while a young man seated in the front part of the carriage let down the glass and called to the postilions to go slowly, for fear of accident, as the crowd was very dense at that part of the square. This young man was M. de Morinval, and on the back seat were M. de Montbron and his niece, Madame de Morinval. The pale and anxious countenance of the young lady showed the alarm which she felt; and Montbron, notwithstanding his firmness of mind, appeared to be very uneasy; he, as well as his niece, frequently had recourse to a smelling-bottle filled with camphor.

During the last few minutes the carriage had advanced very slowly, the postilions managing their horses with great caution, when a sudden hubbub, at first distant and undefined, but soon more distinct, arose among the throng; as it drew near, the ringing sound of chains and metal, peculiar to the artillery-wagons, was plainly audible, and presently one of these vehicles came toward the traveling-carriage from the direction of the Quai Nôtre-Dame. It seemed strange that though the crowd was so compact, yet, at the rapid approach of this wagon, the close ranks of human beings opened as if by enchantment; but the following words, which were passed from mouth to mouth, soon accounted for the prodigy:

"The dead-cart! the dead-cart!"

As we have already stated, the usual funeral conveyances were no longer sufficient for the removal of the corpses; a number of artillery-wagons had been put into requisition, and the coffins were hastily piled in these novel hearses.

Many of the spectators regarded this gloomy vehicle with dismay, but the quarryman and his band redoubled their horrible jokes.

"Make way for the omnibus of the departed!" cried Ciboule.

"No danger of having one's toes crushed in that omnibus," said the quarryman.

"Doubtless, they're easy to please, the stiff-uns in there."

"They never want to be set down, at all events."

"I say, there's only one soldier on duty as postilion!"

"That's true; the leaders are driven by a man in a smock-frock."

"Oh! I dare say the other soldier was tired, lazy fellow! and got into the omnibus with the others — they'll all get out at the same big hole."

"Head foremost, you know."

"Yes, they pitch them head first into a bed of lime."

“Why, one might follow the dead-cart blindfold, and no mistake. It’s worse than Montfauçon knacker-yards!”

“Ha! ha! ha!—it’s rather gamey!” said the quarryman, alluding to the infectious and cadaverous odor which this funeral conveyance left behind it.

“Here’s sport!” exclaimed Ciboule: “the omnibus of the dead will run against the fine coach. Hurrah!—the rich folks will smell death!”

Indeed, the wagon was now directly in front of the carriage, and at a very little distance from it. A man in a smock-frock and wooden shoes drove the two leaders, and an artilleryman the other horses. The coffins were so piled up within this wagon that its semicircular top did not shut down closely, so that, as it jolted heavily over the uneven pavement, the biers could be seen chafing against each other. The fiery eyes and inflamed countenance of the man in the smock-frock showed that he was half intoxicated; urging on the horses with his voice, his heels, and his whip, he paid no attention to the remonstrances of the soldier, who had great difficulty in restraining his own animals, and was obliged to follow the irregular movements of the carman. Advancing in this disorderly manner, the wagon deviated from its course just as it should have passed the traveling-carriage, and ran against it. The shock forced open the top, one of the coffins was thrown out, and, after damaging the panels of the carriage, fell upon the pavement with a dull and heavy sound. The deal planks had been hastily nailed together, and were shivered in the fall, and from the wreck of the coffin rolled a livid corpse, half enveloped in a shroud.

At this horrible spectacle Madame de Morinval, who had mechanically leaned forward, gave a loud scream and fainted. The crowd fell back in dismay; the postilions, no less alarmed, took advantage of the space left open to them by the retreat of the multitude; they whipped their horses, and the carriage dashed on toward the quay.

As it disappeared behind the furthestmost buildings of the hospital, the shrill, joyous notes of distant trumpets were heard, and repeated shouts proclaimed: “*The Cholera Masquerade.*”

The words announced one of those episodes, combining buffoonery with terror, which marked the period when the pestilence was on the increase, though now they can with difficulty be credited. If the evidence of eye-witnesses did not agree in every particular with the accounts given in the public papers of this masquerade, they might be regarded as the ravings of some diseased brain, and not as the notice of a fact which really occurred.

“The Masquerade of the Cholera” appeared, we say, in the square of Nôtre-Dame, just as Morinval’s carriage gained the quay, after disengaging itself from the death-wagon.

CHAPTER V

THE CHOLERA MASQUERADE



STREAM of people, who preceded the masquerade, made a sudden irruption through the arch into the square, uttering loud cheers as they advanced. Children were also there, blowing horns, while some hooted and others hissed.

The quarryman, Ciboule, and their band, attracted by this new spectacle, rushed tumultuously toward the arch.

Instead of the two eating-houses which now (1845) stand on either side of the Rue d'Arcole, there was then only one, situated to the left of the vaulted passage, and much celebrated amongst the joyous community of students for the excellence both of its cookery and its wines. At the first blare of the trumpets, sounded by the outriders in livery who preceded the masquerade, the windows of the great room of the eating-house were thrown open, and several waiters, with their napkins under their arms, leaned forward, impatient to witness the arrival of the singular guests they were expecting.

At length, the grotesque procession made its appearance in the thick of an immense uproar. The train comprised a chariot, escorted by men and women on horseback, clad in rich and elegant fancy dresses. Most of these maskers belonged to the middle and easy classes of society.

The report had spread that a masquerade was in preparation for the purpose of daring the cholera, and, by this joyous demonstration, to revive the courage of the affrighted populace. Immediately artists, young men about town, students, and so on, responded to the appeal, and though till now unknown one to the other, they easily fraternized together. Many brought their mistresses, to complete the show. A subscription had been opened to defray the expenses, and, that morning, after a splendid breakfast at the other end of Paris, the joyous troop had started bravely on their march, to finish the day by a dinner in the square of Nôtre-Dame.

We say bravely, for it required a singular turn of mind, a rare firmness of character, in young women, to traverse in this fashion a great city plunged in consternation and terror—to fall in at every step with litters loaded with the dying and carriages filled with the dead—to defy, as it were, in a spirit of strange pleasantry, the plague that was decimating the Parisians. It is certain that in Paris alone, and there only amongst a peculiar class, could such an idea have ever been conceived or realized. Two men, grotesquely disguised as postilions at a funeral, with formidable false noses, rose-colored crape hat-bands, and large favors of roses and crape bows at their button-holes, rode before the vehicle. Upon the platform of the car were groups of allegorical personages, representing:

WINE, PLEASURE, LOVE, PLAY.

The mission of these symbolical beings was, by means of jokes, sarcasms, and mockeries, to plague the life out of Goodman Cholera, a sort of funereal and burlesque Cassander, whom they ridiculed and made game of in a hundred ways.

The moral of the play was this: “To brave cholera in security, let us drink, laugh, game, and make love!”

Wine was represented by a huge, lusty Silenus, thick-set and with swollen paunch, a crown of ivy on his brow, a panther’s skin across his shoulder, and in his hand a large gilt goblet, wreathed with flowers. None other than Nini Moulin, the famous moral and religious writer, could have exhibited to the astonished and delighted spectators an ear of so deep a scarlet, so majestic an abdomen, and a face of such triumphant and majestic fullness. Every moment Nini Moulin appeared to empty his cup, after which he burst out laughing in the face of Goodman Cholera. *Goodman Cholera*, a cadaverous pantaloon, was half enveloped in a shroud; his mask of greenish cardboard, with red, hollow eyes, seemed every moment to grin as in mockery of death; from beneath his powdered peruke, surmounted by a pyramidal cotton night-cap, appeared his neck and arm, dyed of a bright green color; his lean hand, which shook almost always with a feverish trembling (not feigned, but natural), rested upon a crutch-handled cane; finally, as was becoming in a pantaloon, he wore red stockings, with buckles at the knees, and high slippers of black beaver. This grotesque representative of the cholera was Sleepinbuff. Notwithstanding a slow and dangerous fever, caused by the excessive use of brandy and by constant debauchery, that was silently undermining his constitution, Jacques Rennepont had been induced by Morok to join the masquerade.

The brute-tamer himself, dressed as the King of Diamonds, represented *Play*. His forehead was adorned with a diadem of gilded paper,

his face was pale and impassible, and, as his long, yellow beard fell down the front of his parti-colored robe, Morok looked exactly the character he personated. From time to time, with an air of grave mockery, he shook close to the eyes of Goodman Cholera a large bag full of sounding counters, and on this bag were painted all sorts of playing-cards. A certain stiffness in the right arm showed that the lion-tamer had not yet quite recovered from the effects of the wound which the panther had inflicted before being stabbed by Djalma.

Pleasure, who also represented *Laughter*, classically shook her rattle, with its sonorous gilded bells, close to the ears of Goodman Cholera. She was a quick, lively young girl, and her fine black hair was crowned with a scarlet cap of liberty. For Sleepinbuff's sake, she had taken the place of the poor Bacchanal Queen, who would not have failed to attend on such an occasion—she, who had been so valiant and gay when she bore her part in a less philosophical but not less amusing masquerade.

Another pretty creature, Modeste Bornichoux, who served as a model to a painter of renown (one of the cavaliers of the procession), was eminently successful in her representation of *Love*. He could not have had a more charming face and more graceful form. Clad in a light-blue spangled tunic, with a blue and silver band across her chestnut hair, and little transparent wings affixed to her white shoulders, she placed one forefinger upon the other, and pointed with the prettiest impertinence at Goodman Cholera. Around the principal group, other maskers, more or less grotesque in appearance, waved each a banner, on which were inscriptions of a very anacreontic character, considering the circumstances:

“DOWN WITH THE CHOLERA!” “SHORT AND SWEET!” “LAUGH AWAY, LAUGH ALWAYS!” “WE’LL COLLAR THE CHOLERA!” “LOVE FOREVER!” “WINE FOREVER!” “COME IF YOU DARE, OLD TERROR!”

There was really such audacious gayety in this masquerade that the greater number of the spectators, at the moment when it crossed the square in the direction of the eating-house, where dinner was waiting, applauded it loudly and repeatedly. This sort of admiration, which courage, however mad and blind, almost always inspires, appeared to others (a small number, it must be confessed) a kind of defiance to the wrath of Heaven; and these received the procession with angry murmurs.

This extraordinary spectacle and the different impressions it produced were too remote from all customary facts to admit of a just appreciation. We hardly know if this daring bravado was deserving of praise or blame.

Besides, the appearance of those plagues, which from age to age

decimate the population of whole countries, has almost always been accompanied by a sort of mental excitement, which none of those who have been spared by the contagion can hope to escape. It is a strange fever of the mind, which sometimes rouses the most stupid prejudices



and the most ferocious passions, and sometimes inspires, on the contrary, the most magnificent devotion, the most courageous actions — with some, driving the fear of death to a point of the wildest terror; with others, exciting the contempt of life to express itself in the most

audacious bravadoes. Caring little for the praise or blame it might deserve, the masquerade arrived before the eating-house, and made its entry in the midst of universal acclamations. Everything seemed to combine to give full effect to this strange scene, by the opposition of the most singular contrasts. Thus the tavern in which was to be held this extraordinary feast being situated at no great distance from the antique cathedral and the gloomy hospital, the religious anthems of the ancient temple, the cries of the dying, and the bacchanalian songs of the banqueters must needs mingle, and by turns drown one another. The maskers now got down from their chariot and from their horses and went to take their places at the repast which was waiting for them.

The actors in the masquerade are at table in the great room of the tavern. They are joyous, noisy, even riotous. Yet their gayety has a strange tone peculiar to itself.

Sometimes the most resolute involuntarily remember that their life is at stake in this mad and audacious game with destiny. That fatal thought is rapid as the icy fever-shudder, which chills you in an instant; therefore, from time to time, an abrupt silence, lasting indeed only for a second, betrays these passing emotions, which are almost immediately effaced by new bursts of joyful acclamation, for each one says to himself:

“No weakness! my chum and my girl are looking at me!”

And all laugh and knock glasses together and challenge the next man and drink out of the glass of the nearest woman. Jacques had taken off the mask and peruke of Goodman Cholera. His thin, leaden features, his deadly paleness, the lurid brilliancy of his hollow eyes, showed the incessant progress of the slow malady which was consuming this unfortunate man, brought by excesses to the last extremity of weakness. Though he felt the slow fire devouring his entrails, he concealed his pain beneath a forced and nervous smile.

To the left of Jacques was Morok, whose fatal influence was ever on the increase, and to his right the girl disguised as *Pleasure*. She was named Mariette. By her side sat Nini Moulin, in all his majestic bulk, who often pretended to be looking for his napkin under the table in order to have the opportunity of pressing the knees of his other neighbor, Modeste, the representative of *Love*.

Most of the guests were grouped according to their several tastes, each tender pair together, and the bachelors where they could. They had reached the second course, and the excellence of the wine, the good cheer, the gay speeches, and even the singularity of the occasion had raised their spirits to a high degree of excitement, as may be gathered from the extraordinary incidents of the following scene.

CHAPTER VI

THE DEFIANCE



WO or three times, without being remarked by the guests, one of the waiters had come to whisper to his fellows, and point with expressive gesture to the ceiling. But his comrades had taken small account of his observations or fears, not wishing, doubtless, to disturb the guests, whose mad gayety seemed ever on the increase.

"Who can doubt now of the superiority of our manner of treating this impertinent cholera? Has he dared even to touch our sacred battalion?" said a magnificent mountebank-Turk, one of the standard-bearers of the masquerade.

"Here is all the mystery," answered another. "It is very simple. Only laugh in the face of the plague, and it will run away from you."

"And right enough too, for very stupid work it does," added a pretty little Columbine, emptying her glass.

"You are right, my darling; it is intolerably stupid work," answered the Clown belonging to the Columbine; "here you are, very quiet, enjoying life, and all on a sudden you die with an atrocious grimace. Well! what then? Clever, isn't it? I ask you, what does it prove?"

"It proves," replied an illustrious painter of the romantic school, disguised like a Roman out of one of David's pictures, "it proves that the cholera is a wretched colorist, for he has nothing but a dirty green on his pallet. Evidently he is a pupil of Jacobus, that king of classical painters, who are another species of plagues."

"And yet, master," added respectfully a pupil of the great painter, "I have seen some cholera-patients whose convulsions were rather fine, and their dying looks first-rate!"

"Gentlemen," cried a sculptor of no less celebrity, "the question lies in a nutshell. The cholera is a detestable colorist, but a good draughtsman. He shows you the skeleton in no time. By Heaven! how he strips off the flesh! Michael Angelo would be nothing to him."

"True," cried they all, with one voice; "the cholera is a bad colorist, but a good draughtsman."

"Moreover, gentlemen," added Nini Moulin, with comic gravity, "this plague brings with it a providential lesson, as the great Bossuet would have said."

"The lesson! the lesson!"

"Yes, gentlemen; I seem to hear a voice from above, proclaiming: 'Drink of the best, empty your purse, and kiss your neighbor's wife; for your hours are perhaps numbered, unhappy wretch!'"

So saying, the orthodox Silenus took advantage of a momentary absence of mind on the part of Modeste, his neighbor, to imprint on the blooming cheek of *Love* a long, loud kiss.

The example was contagious, and a storm of kisses was mingled with bursts of laughter.

"Ha! blood and thunder!" cried the great painter, as he gayly threatened Nini Moulin; "you are very lucky that to-morrow will perhaps be the end of the world, or else I should pick a quarrel with you for having kissed my lovely *Love*."

"Which proves to you, oh, Rubens! oh, Raphael! the thousand advantages of the Cholera, whom I declare to be essentially sociable and caressing."

"And philanthropic," said one of the guests; "thanks to him, creditors take care of the health of their debtors. This morning a usurer, who feels a particular interest in my existence, brought me all sorts of anti-choleraic drugs, and begged me to make use of them."

"And I!" said the pupil of the great painter. "My tailor wished to force me to wear a flannel band next to the skin, because I owe him a thousand crowns. But I answered, 'Oh, tailor, give me a receipt in full, and I will wrap myself up in flannel, to preserve you my custom!'"

"Oh, Cholera, I drink to thee!" said Nini Moulin, by way of grotesque invocation. "You are not Despair; on the contrary, you are the emblem of Hope—yes, of Hope. How many husbands, how many wives, longed for a number (alas! too uncertain chance) in the lottery of widowhood! You appear, and their hearts are gladdened. Thanks to you, benevolent pest! their chances of liberty are increased a hundred-fold."

"And how grateful heirs ought to be! A cold—a heat—a trifle—and there, in an hour, some old uncle becomes a revered benefactor!"

"And those who are always looking out for other people's places—what an ally they must find in the Cholera!"

"And how true it will make many vows of constancy!" said Modeste sentimentally. "How many villains have sworn to a poor, weak

woman to love her all their lives, who never meant (the wretches!) to keep their word so well!"

"Gentlemen," cried Nini Moulin, "since we are now, perhaps, at the eve of the end of the world, as yonder celebrated painter has expressed it, I propose to play the world topsy-turvy: I beg these ladies to make advances to us, to tease us, to excite us, to steal kisses from us, to take all sorts of liberties with us, and (we shall not die of it!) even to insult us. Yes, I declare that I will allow myself to be insulted. So, *Lore*, you may offer me the greatest insult that can be offered to a virtuous and modest bachelor," added the religious writer, leaning over toward his neighbor, who repulsed him with peals of laughter; and the proposal of Nini Moulin being received with general hilarity, a new impulse was given to the mirth and riot.

In the midst of the uproar, the waiter, who had before entered the room several times, to whisper uneasily to his comrades, while he pointed to the ceiling, again appeared with a pale and agitated countenance. Approaching the man who performed the office of butler, he said to him, in a low voice, tremulous with emotion:

"They are come!"

"Who?"

"You know—up there." And he pointed to the ceiling.

"Oh!" said the butler, becoming thoughtful; "where are they?"

"They have just gone upstairs; they are there now," answered the waiter, shaking his head with an air of alarm; "yes, they are there!"

"What does master say?"

"He is very vexed, because"—and the waiter glanced round at the guests—"he does not know what to do; he has sent me to you."

"What the devil have I to do with it?" said the other, wiping his forehead. "It was to be expected, and cannot be helped."

"I will not remain here till they begin."

"You may as well go, for your long face already attracts attention. Tell master we must wait for the upshot."

The above incident was scarcely perceived in the midst of the growing tumult of the joyous feast.

But, among the guests, one alone laughed not, drank not. This was Jacques. With fixed and lurid eye, he gazed upon vacancy. A stranger to what was passing around him, the unhappy man thought of the Bacchanal Queen, who had been so gay and brilliant in the midst of similar saturnalia. The remembrance of that one being, whom he still loved with an extravagant love, was the only thought that from time to time roused him from his besotted state.

It is strange, but Jacques had only consented to join this masquer-

ade because the mad scene reminded him of the merry day he had spent with Cephyse—that famous breakfast, after a night of dancing, in which the Bacchanal Queen, from some extraordinary presentiment, had proposed a lugubrious toast with regard to this very pestilence, which was then reported to be approaching France.

“To the Cholera!” had she said. “Let him spare those who wish to live, and kill at the same moment those who dread to part!”

And now, at this time, remembering those mournful words, Jacques was absorbed in painful thought. Morok perceived his absence of mind, and said aloud to him:

“You have given over drinking, Jacques. Have you had enough wine? Then you will want brandy. I will send for some.”

“I want neither wine nor brandy,” answered Jacques abruptly; and he fell back into a somber reverie.

“Well, you may be right,” resumed Morok, in a sardonic tone, and raising his voice still higher. “You do well to take care of yourself. I was wrong to name brandy in these times. There would be as much temerity in facing a bottle of brandy as the barrel of a loaded pistol.”

On hearing his courage as a toper called in question, Sleepinbuff looked angrily at Morok.

“You think it is from cowardice that I will not drink brandy!” cried the unfortunate man, whose half-extinguished intellect was roused to defend what he called his dignity. “Is it from cowardice that I refuse, d’ye think, Morok? Answer me!”

“Come, my good fellow, we have all shown our pluck to-day,” said one of the guests to Jacques; “you, above all, who, being rather indisposed, yet had the courage to take the part of Goodman Cholera.”

“Gentlemen,” resumed Morok, seeing the general attention fixed upon himself and Sleepinbuff, “I was only joking; for if my comrade” (pointing to Jacques) “had the imprudence to accept my offer, it would be an act, not of courage, but of foolhardiness. Luckily, he has sense enough to renounce a piece of boasting so dangerous at this time, and I ——”

“Waiter!” cried Jacques, interrupting Morok with angry impatience, “two bottles of brandy and two glasses!”

“What are you going to do?” said Morok, with pretended uneasiness. “Why do you order two bottles of brandy?”

“For a duel,” said Jacques, in a cool, resolute tone.

“A duel!” cried the spectators in surprise.

“Yes,” resumed Jacques, “a duel with brandy. You pretend there is as much danger in facing a bottle of brandy as a loaded pistol; let us each take a full bottle, and see who will be the first to cry quarter.”

This strange proposition was received by some with shouts of joy and by others with genuine uneasiness.

"Bravo! the champions of the bottle!" cried the first.

"No, no; there would be too much danger in such a contest," said the others.

"Just now," added one of the guests, "this challenge is as serious as an invitation to fight to the death."

"You hear," said Morok, with a diabolical smile, "you hear, Jacques? Will you now retreat before the danger?"

At these words, which reminded him of the peril to which he was about to expose himself, Jacques started, as if a sudden idea had occurred to him. He raised his head proudly, his cheeks were slightly flushed, his eye shone with a kind of gloomy satisfaction, and he exclaimed in a firm voice: "Hang it, waiter! are you deaf? I asked you for two bottles of brandy."

"Yes, sir," said the waiter, going to fetch them, although himself frightened at what might be the result of this bacchanalian struggle. But the mad and perilous resolution of Jacques was applauded by the majority.

Nini Moulin moved about on his chair, stamped his feet, and shouted with all his might:

"Bacchus and drink! bottles and glasses! the throats are dry! brandy to the rescue! Largess! largess!"

And, like a true champion of the tournament, he embraced Modeste, adding, to excuse the liberty:

"Love, you shall be the Queen of Beauty, and I am only anticipating the victor's happiness!"

"Brandy to the rescue!" repeated they all in chorus. "Largess!"

"Gentlemen," added Nini Moulin, with enthusiasm, shall we remain indifferent to the noble example set us by Goodman Cholera? He said in his pride, 'brandy!' Let us gloriously answer, 'punch!'"

"Yes, yes! punch!"

"Punch to the rescue!"

"Waiter!" shouted the religious writer, with the voice of a Stentor, "waiter! have you a pan, a caldron, a hogshhead, or any other immensity in which we can brew a monster punch?"

"A Babylonian punch!"

"A lake of punch!"

"An ocean of punch!"

Such was the ambitious crescendo that followed the proposition of Nini Moulin.

"Sir," answered the waiter, with an air of triumph, "we just happen

to have a large copper caldron, quite new. It has never been used, and would hold at least thirty bottles."

"Bring the caldron!" said Nini Moulin majestically.

"The caldron forever!" shouted the chorus.

"Put in twenty bottles of brandy, six loaves of sugar, a dozen lemons, a pound of cinnamon, and then — fire! fire!" shouted the religious writer, with the most vociferous exclamations.

"Yes, yes! fire! fire!" repeated the chorus.

The proposition of Nini Moulin gave a new impetus to the general gayety; the most extravagant remarks were mingled with the sound of kisses, taken or given under the pretext that perhaps there would be no to-morrow, that one must make the most of the present, etc., etc.

Suddenly, in one of the moments of silence which sometimes occur in the midst of the greatest tumult, a succession of slow and measured taps sounded above the ceiling of the banqueting-room. All remained silent, and listened.

CHAPTER VII

BRANDY TO THE RESCUE



AFTER the lapse of some seconds, the singular rapping which had so much surprised the guests was again heard, but this time louder and longer.

"Waiter!" cried one of the party, "what in the devil's name is that knocking?"

The waiter, exchanging with his comrades a look of uneasiness and alarm, stammered out in reply: "Sir—it is—it is ——"

"Well! I suppose it is some crabbed, cross-grained lodger, some animal, the enemy of joy, who is pounding on the floor of his room to warn us to sing less loud," said Nini Moulin.

"Then, by a general rule," answered sententiously the pupil of the great painter, "if lodger or landlord ask for silence, tradition bids us reply by an infernal uproar, destined to drown all his remonstrances. Such, at least," added the scapegrace modestly, "are the foreign relations that I have always seen observed between neighboring powers."

This remark was received with general laughter and applause. During the tumult Morok questioned one of the waiters, and then exclaimed in a shrill tone, which rose above the clamor:

"I demand a hearing!"

"Granted!" cried the others gayly.

During the silence which followed the exclamation of Morok, the noise was again heard; it was this time quicker than before.

"The lodger is innocent," said Morok, with a strange smile, "and would be quite incapable of interfering with your enjoyment."

"Then why does he keep up that knocking?" said Nini Moulin, emptying his glass.

"Like a deaf man who has lost his ear-horn?" added the young artist.

"It is not the lodger who is knocking," said Morok, in a sharp, quick tone, "for they are nailing him down in his coffin."

A sudden and mournful silence followed these words.

"His coffin — no, I am wrong," resumed Morok; "her coffin, I should say, or more properly their coffin; for, in these pressing times, they put mother and child together."

"A woman!" cried *Pleasure*, addressing the waiter; "is it a woman that is dead?"

"Yes, ma'am; a poor young woman about twenty years of age," answered the waiter in a sorrowful tone. "Her little girl, that she was nursing, died soon after—all in less than two hours. My master is very sorry that you ladies and gents should be disturbed in this way; but he could not foresee this misfortune, as yesterday morning the young woman was quite well, and singing with all her might — no one could have been gayer than she was."

Upon these words, it was as if a funeral pall had been suddenly thrown over a scene lately so full of joy; all the rubicund and jovial faces took an expression of sadness; no one had the hardihood to make a jest of mother and child, nailed down together in the same coffin. The silence became so profound that one could hear each breath oppressed by terror; the last blows of the hammer seemed to strike painfully on every heart; it appeared as if each sad feeling, until now repressed, was about to replace that animation and gayety which had been more factitious than sincere. The moment was decisive. It was necessary to strike an immediate blow and to raise the spirits of the guests, for many pretty rosy faces began to grow pale, many scarlet ears became suddenly white; Nini Moulin's were of the number.

On the contrary, Sleepinbuff exhibited an increase of audacity; he drew up his figure, bent down from the effects of exhaustion, and, with a cheek slightly flushed, he exclaimed:

"Well, waiter? are those bottles of brandy coming; and the punch? Devil and all! are the dead to frighten the living?"

"He's right! Down with sorrow, and let's have the punch!" cried several of the guests, who felt the necessity of reviving their courage.

"Forward, punch!"

"Begone, dull care!"

"Jollity forever!"

"Gentlemen, here is the punch," said a waiter, opening the door.

At sight of the flaming beverage, which was to reanimate their enfeebled spirits, the room rang with the loudest applause.

The sun had just set. The room was large, being capable of dining a hundred guests; and the windows were few, narrow, and half veiled by red cotton curtains. Though it was not yet night, some portions of this vast saloon were almost entirely dark. Two waiters brought the monster punch in an immense brass kettle, brilliant as gold, suspended

from an iron bar, and crowned with flames of changing color. The burning beverage was then placed upon the table, to the great joy of the guests, who began to forget their past alarms.



"Now," said Jacques to Morok, in a taunting tone, "while the punch is burning we will have our duel. The company shall judge." Then, pointing to the two bottles of brandy which the waiter had brought, Jacques added :

"Choose your weapon!"

"Do you choose," answered Morok.

"Well! here's your bottle—and here's your glass. Nini Moulin shall be umpire."

"I do not refuse to be judge of the field," answered the religious writer; "only I must warn you, comrade, that you are playing a desperate game, and that just now, as one of these gentlemen has said, the neck of a bottle of brandy in one's mouth is perhaps more dangerous than the barrel of a loaded pistol."

"Give the word, old fellow!" said Jacques, interrupting Nini Moulin, "or I will give it myself."

"Since you will have it so—so be it!"

"The first who gives in is conquered," said Jacques.

"Agreed!" answered Morok.

"Come, gentlemen, attention! we must follow every movement," resumed Nini Moulin. "Let us first see if the bottles are of the same size—equality of weapons being the foremost condition."

During these preparations profound silence reigned in the room. The courage of the majority of those present, animated for a moment by the arrival of the punch, was soon again depressed by gloomy thoughts as they vaguely foresaw the danger of the contest between Morok and Jacques. This impression, joined to the sad thoughts occasioned by the incident of the coffin, darkened by degrees many a countenance. Some of the guests, indeed, continued to make a show of rejoicing, but their gayety appeared forced. Under certain circumstances the smallest things will have the most powerful effect. We have said that, after sunset, a portion of this large room was plunged in obscurity; therefore, the guests who sat in the remote corners of the apartment had no other light than the reflection of the flaming punch. Now it is well known that the flame of burning spirit throws a livid, bluish tint over the countenance; it was, therefore, a strange, almost frightful, spectacle to see a number of the guests, who happened to be at a distance from the windows, in this ghastly and fantastic light.

The painter, more struck than all the rest by this effect of color, exclaimed:

"Look! at this end of the table we might fancy ourselves feasting with cholera-patients, we are such fine blues and greens."

This jest was not much relished. Fortunately the loud voice of Nini Moulin demanded attention, and for a moment turned the thoughts of the company.

"The lists are open," cried the religious writer, really more frightened than he chose to appear. "Are you ready, brave champions?" he added.

"We are ready," said Morok and Jacques.

"Present! fire!" cried Nini Moulin, clapping his hands.

The two drinkers each emptied a tumblerful of brandy at a draught.

Morok did not even knit his brow; his marble face remained impassible; with a steady hand he replaced his glass upon the table. But Jacques, as he put down his glass, could not conceal a slight convulsive trembling, caused by internal suffering.

"Bravely done!" cried Nini Moulin. "The quarter of a bottle of brandy at a draught—it is glorious! No one else here would be capable of such prowess. And now, worthy champions, if you believe me, you will stop where you are."

"Give the word!" answered Jacques intrepidly.

And, with feverish and shaking hand, he seized the bottle; then suddenly, instead of filling his glass, he said to Morok:

"Bah! we want no glasses; it is braver to drink from the bottle. I dare you to it!"

Morok's only answer was to shrug his shoulders and raise the neck of the bottle to his lips.

Jacques hastened to imitate him.

The thin, yellowish, transparent glass gave a perfect view of the progressive diminution of the liquor.

The stony countenance of Morok, and the pale, thin face of Jacques, on which already stood large drops of cold sweat, were now, as well as the features of the other guests, illumined by the bluish light of the punch; every eye was fixed upon Morok and Jacques, with that barbarous curiosity which cruel spectacles seem involuntarily to inspire.

Jacques continued to drink, holding the bottle in his left hand; suddenly he closed and tightened the fingers of his right hand with a convulsive movement; his hair clung to his icy forehead, and his countenance revealed an agony of pain. Yet he continued to drink; only, without removing his lips from the neck of the bottle, he lowered it for an instant, as if to recover breath. Just then Jacques met the sardonic look of Morok, who continued to drink with his accustomed impassibility. Thinking that he saw the expression of insulting triumph in Morok's glance, Jacques raised his elbow abruptly and drank with avidity a few drops more. But his strength was exhausted. A quenchless fire devoured his vitals. His sufferings were too intense, and he could no longer bear up against them. His head fell backward, his jaws closed convulsively, he crushed the neck of the bottle between his teeth, his neck grew rigid, his limbs writhed with spasmodic action, and he became almost senseless.

"Jacques, my good fellow! it is nothing," cried Morok, whose ferocious glance now sparkled with diabolical joy.

Then, replacing his bottle on the table, he rose to go to the aid of Nini Moulin, who was vainly endeavoring to hold Sleepinbuff.

This sudden attack had none of the symptoms of cholera. Yet terror seized upon all present; one of the women was taken with hysterics, and another uttered piercing cries and fainted away.

Nini Moulin, leaving Jacques in the hands of Morok, ran toward the door to seek for help,—when that door was suddenly opened, and the religious writer drew back in alarm at the sight of the unexpected personage who appeared on the threshold.

CHAPTER VIII

MEMORIES

THE person before whom Nini Moulin stopped in such extreme astonishment was the Bacchanal Queen.

Pale and wan, with hair in disorder, hollow cheeks, sunken eyes, and clothed almost in rags, this brilliant and joyous heroine of so many mad orgies was now only the shadow of her former self. Misery and grief were impressed on that countenance, once so charming.

Hardly had she entered the room, when Cephyse paused; her mournful and unquiet gaze strove to penetrate the half obscurity of the apartment, in search of him she longed to see. Suddenly the girl started and uttered a loud scream. She had just perceived, at the other side of a long table, by the bluish light of the punch, Jacques struggling with Morok and one of the guests, who were hardly able to restrain his convulsive movements.

At this sight Cephyse, in her first alarm, carried away by her affection, did what she had so often done in the intoxication of joy and pleasure. Light and agile, instead of losing precious time in making a long circuit, she sprang at once upon the table, passed nimbly through the array of plates and bottles, and with one spring was by the side of the sufferer.

“Jacques!” she exclaimed, without yet remarking the lion-tamer, and throwing herself on the neck of her lover. “Jacques! it is I—Cephyse!”

That well-known voice, that heart-piercing cry, which came from the bottom of the soul, seemed not unheard by Sleepinbuff. He turned his head mechanically toward the Bacchanal Queen, without opening his eyes, and heaved a deep sigh; his stiffened limbs relaxed, a slight trembling succeeded to the convulsions, and in a few seconds his heavy eyelids were raised with an effort, so as to uncover his dull and wandering gaze. Mute with astonishment, the spectators of this scene felt an uneasy curiosity. Cephyse, kneeling beside her lover, bathed his hands

in her tears, covered them with kisses, and exclaimed, in a voice broken by sobs:

"It is I—Cephyse; I have found you again. It was not my fault that I abandoned you! Forgive me, forgive——"

"Wretched woman!" cried Morok, irritated at this meeting, which might, perhaps, be fatal to his projects; "do you wish to kill him? In his present state, this agitation is death. Begone!"

So saying, he seized Cephyse suddenly by the arm, just as Jacques, waking, as it were, from a painful dream, began to distinguish what was passing around him.

"You! it is you!" cried the Bacchanal Queen, in amazement, as she recognized Morok, "who separated me from Jacques!"

She paused; for the dim eye of the victim, as it rested upon her, grew suddenly bright.

"Cephyse!" murmured Jacques; "is it you?"

"Yes, it is I," answered she, in a voice of deep emotion, "who have come—I will tell you——"

She was unable to continue, and, as she clasped her hands together, her pale, agitated, tearful countenance expressed her astonishment and despair at the mortal change which had taken place in the features of Jacques.

He understood the cause of her surprise, and as he contemplated, in his turn, the suffering and emaciated countenance of Cephyse, he said to her:

"Poor girl! you also have had to bear much grief, much misery—I should hardly have known you."

"Yes," replied Cephyse, "much grief—much misery—and worse than misery," she added, trembling, while a deep blush overspread her pale features.

"Worse than misery?" said Jacques, astonished.

"But it is you who have suffered," hastily resumed Cephyse, without answering her lover.

"Just now, I was going to make an end of it—your voice has recalled me for an instant; but I feel something here," and he laid his hand upon his breast, "which never gives quarter. It is all the same now—I have seen you—I shall die happy."

"You shall not die, Jacques; I am here——"

"Listen to me, my girl. If I had a bushel of live coal in my stomach, it could hardly burn me more. For more than a month I have been consuming my body by a slow fire. This gentleman," he added, glancing at Morok, "this dear friend, always undertook to feed the flame. I do not regret life; I have lost the habit of work, and taken to drink and

riot; I should have finished by becoming a thorough blackguard; I preferred that my friend here should amuse himself with lighting a furnace in my inside. Since what I drank just now, I am certain that it flames like yonder punch."



"You are both foolish and ungrateful," said Morok, shrugging his shoulders; "you held out your glass and I filled it—and, faith, we shall drink long and often together yet."

For some moments Cephyse had not withdrawn her eyes from Morok.

"I tell you that you have long blown the fire in which I have burnt my skin," resumed Jacques, addressing Morok in a feeble voice, "so that they may not think I die of cholera. It would look as if I had been frightened by the part I played. I do not therefore reproach you, my affectionate friend," added he, with a sardonic smile; "you dug my grave gayly. And sometimes, when seeing the great dark hole into which I was about to fall, I drew back a step; but you, my excellent friend, still pushed me forward, saying: 'Go on, my boy, go on!'—and I went on—and here I am ——"

So saying, Sleepinbuff burst into a bitter laugh, which sent an icy shudder through the spectators of this scene.

"My good fellow," said Morok coolly, "listen to me, and follow my advice ——"

"Thank you! I know your advice—and, instead of listening to you, I prefer speaking to my poor Cephyse. Before I go down to the moles I should like to tell her what weighs on my heart."

"Jacques," replied Cephyse, "do not talk so. I tell you you shall not die."

"Why, then, my brave Cephyse, I shall owe my life to you," returned Jacques, in a tone of serious feeling, which surprised the spectators. "Yes," resumed he, "when I came to myself and saw you so poorly clad, I felt something good about my heart—do you know why?—it was because I said to myself, 'Poor girl! she has kept her word bravely; she has chosen to toil and want and suffer rather than take another love, who would have given her what I gave her as long as I could,'—and that thought, Cephyse, refreshed my soul. I needed it, for I was burning,—and I burn still," added he, clenching his fists with pain; "but that made me happy—it did me good. Thanks, my good, brave Cephyse—yes, you are good and brave—and you were right; for I never loved any but you in the wide world; and if, in my degradation, I had one thought that raised me a little above the filth, and made me regret that I was not better, the thought was of you! Thanks, then, my poor, dear love," said Jacques, whose hot and shining eyes were becoming moist; "thanks, once again," and he reached his cold hand to Cephyse; "if I die, I shall die happy—if I live, I shall live happy also. Give me your hand, my brave Cephyse! you have acted like a good and honest creature."

Instead of taking the hand which Jacques offered her, Cephyse, still kneeling, bowed her head and dared not raise her eyes to her lover.

"You don't answer," said he, leaning over toward the young girl; "you don't take my hand—why is this?"

The unfortunate creature only answered by stifled sobs. Borne down with shame, she held herself in so humble, so supplicating an attitude that her forehead almost touched the feet of her lover.

Amazed at the silence and conduct of the Bacchanal Queen, Jacques looked at her with increasing agitation; suddenly he stammered out, with trembling lips:

"Cephyse, I know you. If you do not take my hand it is because ——" Then, his voice failing, he added in a dull tone, after a moment's silence: "When, six weeks ago, I was taken to prison, did you not say to me, 'Jacques, I swear that I will work—and, if need be, live in horrible misery—but I will live true!' That was your promise. Now, I know you never speak false; tell me you have kept your word and I shall believe you."

Cephyse only answered by a heartrending sob, as she pressed the knees of Jacques against her heaving bosom.

By a strange contradiction, more common than is generally thought, this man, degraded by intoxication and debauchery, who, since he came out of prison, had plunged in every excess, and tamely yielded to all the fatal incitements of Morok, yet received a fearful blow, when he learned, by the mute avowal of Cephyse, the infidelity of this creature, whom he had loved in spite of degradation. The first impulse of Jacques was terrible. Notwithstanding his weakness and exhaustion, he succeeded in rising from his seat, and, with a countenance contracted by rage and despair, he seized a knife, before they had time to prevent him, and turned it upon Cephyse. But at the moment he was about to strike, shrinking from an act of murder, he hurled the knife far away from him, and, falling back into the chair, covered his face with his hands.

At the cry of Nini Moulin, who had, though late, thrown himself upon Jacques to take away the knife, Cephyse raised her head; Jacques' woful dejection wrung her heart; she rose and fell upon his neck, notwithstanding his resistance, exclaiming in a voice broken by sobs:

"Jacques, if you knew! if you only knew! Listen — do not condemn me without hearing me. I will tell you all, I swear to you — without falsehood — this man," and she pointed to Morok, "will not dare deny what I say; he came and told me to have the courage to ——"

"I do not reproach you. I have no right to reproach you. Let me die in peace. I ask nothing but that now," said Jacques, in a still weaker voice, as he repulsed Cephyse. Then he added, with a grievous and bitter smile:

"Luckily I have my dose. I knew — what I was doing — when I accepted the duel with brandy."

"No, you shall not die, and you shall hear me," cried Cephyse, with a bewildered air; "you shall hear me, and everybody else shall hear me. They shall see that it is not my fault. Is it not so, gentlemen? Do I not deserve pity? You will entreat Jacques to forgive me; for if driven by misery — finding no work — I was forced to this — not for the sake of any luxury,—you see the rags I wear,—but to get bread and shelter for my poor, sick sister,—dying, and even more miserable than myself,—would you not have pity upon me? Do you think one finds pleasure in one's infamy?" cried the unfortunate, with a burst of frightful laughter; then she added, in a low voice and with a shudder, "Oh, if you knew, Jacques! It is so infamous, so horrible, that I preferred death to fall so low a second time. I should have killed myself, had I not heard you were here."

Then, seeing that Jacques did not answer her, but shook his head mournfully as he sank down, though still supported by Nini Moulin, Cephyse exclaimed, as she lifted her clasped hands toward him:

"Jacques! one word — for pity's sake — forgive me!"

"Gentlemen, pray remove this woman," cried Morok; "the sight of her causes my friend too painful emotions."

"Come, my dear child, be reasonable," said several of the guests, who, deeply moved by this scene, were endeavoring to withdraw Cephyse from it; "leave him, and come with us; he is not in any danger."

"Gentlemen! oh, gentlemen!" cried the unfortunate creature, bursting into tears and raising her hands in supplication; "listen to me — I will do all that you wish me — I will go — but, in Heaven's name, send for help, and do not let him die thus. Look, what pain he suffers! what horrible convulsions!"

"She is right," said one of the guests, hastening toward the door; "we must send for a doctor."

"There is no doctor to be found," said another; "they are all too busy."

"We will do better than that," cried a third; "the hospital is just opposite, and we can carry the poor fellow thither. They will give him instant help. A leaf of the table will make a litter, and the table-cloth, a covering."

"Yes, yes, that is it," said several voices; "let us carry him over at once."

Jacques, burnt up with brandy and overcome by his interview with Cephyse, had again fallen into violent convulsions. It was the dying paroxysm of the unfortunate man. They were obliged to tie him with the ends of the cloth, so as to secure him to the leaf which was to serve for a litter, which two of the guests hastened to carry away. They

yielded to the supplications of Cephyse, who asked, as a last favor, to accompany Jacques to the hospital.

When the mournful procession quitted the great room of the eating-house, there was a general flight amongst the guests. Men and women made haste to wrap themselves in their cloaks, in order to conceal their costumes. The coaches, which had been ordered in tolerable number for the return of the masquerade, had luckily arrived. The defiance had been fully carried out, the audacious *bravado* accomplished, and they could now retire with the honors of war. While a part of the guests were still in the room, an uproar, at first distant, but which soon drew nearer, broke out with incredible fury in the square of Nôtre-Dame.

Jacques had been carried to the outer door of the tavern. Morok and Nini Moulin, striving to open a passage through the crowd in the direction of the hospital, preceded the litter. A violent reflux of the multitude soon forced them to stop, while a new storm of savage outcries burst from the other extremity of the square, near the angle of the church.

“What is it then?” asked Nini Moulin of one of those ignoble figures that was leaping up before him. “What are those cries?”

“They are making mince-meat of a poisoner, like him they have thrown into the river,” replied the man. “If you want to see the fun, follow me close,” added he, “and peg away with your elbows, for fear you should be too late.”

Hardly had the wretch pronounced these words than a dreadful shriek sounded above the roar of the crowd, through which the bearers of the litter, preceded by Morok, were with difficulty making their way. It was Cephyse who uttered that cry. Jacques (one of the seven heirs of the Rennepont family) had just expired in her arms! By a strange fatality, at the very moment that the despairing exclamation of Cephyse announced that death, another cry rose from that part of the square where they were attacking the poisoner. That distant, supplicating cry, tremulous with horrible alarm, like the last appeal of a man staggering beneath the blows of his murderers, chilled the soul of Morok in the midst of his execrable triumph.

“Damnation!” cried the skillful assassin who had selected drunkenness and debauchery for his murderous but legal weapons; “it is the voice of the Abbé d’Aigrigny, whom they have in their clutches!”

CHAPTER IX

THE POISONER

IT is necessary to go back a little before relating the adventure of Father d'Aigrigny, whose cry of distress made so deep an impression upon Morok just at the moment of Jacques Rennepont's death.

The scenes we are about to depict are atrocious. If we may hope that they will be instructive, this frightful picture, by the very horror it inspires, may tend to prevent such barbarous excesses as those to which the ignorant and blind multitude is hurried when it allows itself to be misled by agitators of stupid ferocity.

We have said that the most absurd and alarming reports were circulating in Paris; not only did people talk of poison given to the sick or thrown into the public fountains, but it was also said that wretches had been surprised in the act of putting arsenic into the pots which are usually kept all ready on the counters of wine-shops.

Goliath was on his way to rejoin Morok, after delivering a message to Father d'Aigrigny, who was waiting in a house on the Place de l'Archévêché. He entered a wine-shop in the Rue de la Calandre, to get some refreshment, and having drunk two glasses of wine he proceeded to pay for them. While the woman of the house was looking for change, Goliath, mechanically and very innocently, rested his hand on the mouth of one of the pots that happened to be within his reach.

The tall stature of this man and his repulsive and savage countenance had already alarmed the good woman, whose fears and prejudices had previously been roused by the public rumors on the subject of poisoning; but when she saw Goliath place his hand over the mouth of one of her pots, she cried out in dismay:

"Oh! my gracious! what are you throwing into that pot?"

At these words, spoken in a loud voice, and with the accent of terror, two or three of the drinkers at one of the tables rose precipitately and ran to the counter, while one of them rashly exclaimed:

"It is a poisoner!"

Goliath, not aware of the reports circulated in the neighborhood, did not at first understand of what he was accused. The men raised their voices as they called on him to answer the charge; but he, trusting to his strength, shrugged his shoulders in disdain, and roughly demanded the change, which the pale and frightened hostess no longer thought of giving him.

"Rascal!" cried one of the men, with so much violence that several of the passers-by stopped to listen; "you shall have your change when you tell us what you threw in the pot!"

"Ha! did he throw anything into the wine-pot?" said one of the passers-by.

"It is, perhaps, a poisoner," said another.

"He ought to be taken up," added a third.

"Yes, yes," cried those in the house — honest people, perhaps, but under the influence of the general panic; "he must be taken up, for he has been throwing poison into the wine-pots."

The words "He is a poisoner" soon spread through the group, which, at first composed of three or four persons, increased every instant around the door of the wine-shop. A dull, menacing clamor began to rise from the crowd; the first accuser, seeing his fears thus shared and almost justified, thought he was acting like a good and courageous citizen in taking Goliath by the collar and saying to him: "Come and explain yourself at the guard-house, villain!"

The giant, already provoked at insults of which he did not perceive the real meaning, was exasperated at this sudden attack; yielding to his natural brutality, he knocked his adversary down upon the counter and began to hammer him with his fists. During this collision, several bottles and two or three panes of glass were broken with much noise, while the woman of the house, more and more frightened, cried out with all her might:

"Help! a poisoner! Help! murder!"

At the sound of the breaking windows and these cries of distress, the passers-by, of whom the greater number believed in the stories about the poisoners, rushed into the shop to aid in securing Goliath. But the latter, thanks to his herculean strength, after struggling for some moments with seven or eight persons, knocked down two of his most furious assailants, disengaged himself from the others, drew near the counter, and, taking a vigorous spring, rushed head foremost, like a bull about to butt, upon the crowd that blocked up the door; then, forcing a passage by the help of his enormous shoulders and athletic arms, he made his way into the street and ran with all speed in the direction of the square of *Nôtre-Dame*, his garments torn, his head

bare, and his countenance pale and full of rage. Immediately, a number of persons from among the crowd started in pursuit of Goliath, and a hundred voices exclaimed:

“Stop — stop the poisoner!”

Hearing these cries, and seeing a man draw near with a wild and troubled look, a butcher who happened to be passing with his large, empty tray on his head, threw it against Goliath's shins, and, taken by surprise, he stumbled and fell. The butcher, thinking he had performed as heroic an action as if he had encountered a mad dog, flung himself on Goliath and rolled over with him on the pavement, exclaiming:

“Help! it is a poisoner! Help! help!”

This scene took place not far from the cathedral, but at some distance from the crowd which was pressing round the hospital gate, as well as from the eating-house in which the masquerade of the cholera then was. The day was now drawing to a close. On the piercing call of the butcher, several groups, at the head of which were Ciboule and the quarryman, flew toward the scene of the struggle, while those who had pursued the pretended poisoner from the Rue de la Calandre reached the square on their side.

At sight of this threatening crowd advancing toward him, Goliath, while he continued to defend himself against the butcher, who held him with the tenacity of a bull-dog, felt that he was lost unless he could rid himself of this adversary before the arrival of the rest; with a furious blow of the fist, therefore, he broke the jaw of the butcher, who just then was above him, and, disengaging himself from his hold, he rose and staggered a few steps forward.

Suddenly he stopped. He saw that he was surrounded. Behind him rose the walls of the cathedral; to the right and left, and in front of him, advanced a hostile multitude. The groans uttered by the butcher, who had just been lifted from the ground covered with blood, augmented the fury of the populace.

This was a terrible moment for Goliath; still standing alone in the center of a ring that grew smaller every second, he saw on all sides angry enemies rushing toward him and uttering cries of death. As the wild boar turns round once or twice before resolving to stand at bay and face the devouring pack, Goliath, struck with terror, made one or two abrupt and wavering movements. Then, as he abandoned the possibility of flight, instinct told him that he had no mercy to expect from a crowd given up to blind and savage fury—a fury the more pitiless as it was believed to be legitimate. Goliath determined, therefore, at least to sell his life dearly; he sought for a knife in his pocket, but, not finding it, he threw out his left leg in an athletic posture, and, hold-



GOLIATH FACING THE MOB.

ing up his muscular arms, hard and stiff as bars of iron, waited with intrepidity for the shock.

The first who approached Goliath was Ciboule. The hag, heated and out of breath, instead of rushing upon him, paused, stooped down, and taking off one of the large wooden shoes that she wore, hurled it at the giant's head with so much force and with so true an aim that it struck him right in the eye, which hung half out of its socket.

Goliath pressed his hands to his face and uttered a cry of excruciating pain.

"I've made him squint!" said Ciboule, with a burst of laughter.

Goliath, maddened by the pain, instead of waiting for the attack, which the mob still hesitated to begin, so greatly were they awed by his appearance of herculean strength—the only adversary worthy to cope with him being the quarryman, who had been borne to a distance by the surging crowd—Goliath, in his rage, rushed headlong upon the nearest.

Such a struggle was too unequal to last long; but despair redoubled the Colossus's strength, and the combat was for a moment terrible. The unfortunate man did not fall at once. For some seconds, almost buried amid a swarm of furious assailants, one saw now his mighty arm rise and fall like a sledge-hammer, beating upon skulls and faces; and now his enormous head, livid and bloody, drawn back by some of the combatants hanging to his tangled hair. Here and there, sudden openings and violent oscillations of the crowd bore witness to the incredible energy of Goliath's defense. But when the quarryman succeeded in reaching him, Goliath was overpowered and thrown down.

A long, savage cheer in triumph announced this fall; for, under such circumstances, to "*go under*" is "to die." Instantly a thousand breathless and angry voices repeated the cry of—

"Death to the poisoner!"

Then began one of those scenes of massacre and torture worthy of cannibals, horrible to relate, and the more incredible that they happen almost always in the presence, and often with the aid, of honest and humane people, who, blinded by false notions and stupid prejudices, allow themselves to be led into all sorts of barbarity under the idea of performing an act of inexorable justice. As it frequently happens, the sight of the blood which flowed in torrents from Goliath's wounds inflamed to madness the rage of his assailants. A hundred fists struck at the unhappy man; he was stamped under foot; his face and chest were beaten in. Ever and anon, in the midst of furious cries of "Death to the poisoner!" heavy blows were audible, followed by stifled groans. It was a frightful butchery. Each individual, yielding to a sanguinary

frenzy, came in turn to strike his blow or to tear off his morsel of flesh. Women—yes, women—mothers!—came to spend their rage on this mutilated form.

There was one moment of frightful terror. With his face all bruised and covered with mud, his garments in rags, his chest bare, red, gaping with wounds, Goliath, availing himself of a moment's weariness on the part of his assassins, who believed him already finished, succeeded, by one of those convulsive starts frequent in the last agony, in raising himself to his feet for a few seconds; then, blind with wounds and loss of blood, striking about his arms in the air as if to parry blows that were no longer struck, he muttered these words, which came from his mouth accompanied by a crimson torrent:

"Mercy! I am no poisoner. Mercy!"

This sort of resurrection produced so great an effect on the crowd that for an instant they fell back affrighted. The clamor ceased, and a small space was left around the victim. Some hearts began even to feel pity; when the quarryman, seeing Goliath blinded with blood, groping before him with his hands, exclaimed, in ferocious allusion to a well-known game:

"Now for blind-man's-buff."

Then, with a violent kick, he again threw down the victim, whose head struck twice heavily on the pavement.

Just as the giant fell a voice from amongst the crowd exclaimed:

"It is Goliath! stop! he is innocent."

It was Father d'Aigrigny, who, yielding to a generous impulse, was making violent efforts to reach the foremost rank of the actors in this scene, and who cried out as he came nearer, pale, indignant, menacing:

"You are cowards and murderers! This man is innocent. I know him. You shall answer for his life."

These vehement words were received with loud murmurs.

"You know that poisoner," cried the quarryman, seizing the Jesuit by the collar; "then perhaps you are a poisoner too."

"Wretch!" exclaimed Father d'Aigrigny, endeavoring to shake himself loose from the grasp, "do you dare to lay hand upon me?"

"Yes, I dare do anything," answered the quarryman.

"He knows him; he's a poisoner like the other," cried the crowd, pressing round the two adversaries; while Goliath, who had fractured his skull in the fall, uttered a long death-rattle.

At a sudden movement of Father d'Aigrigny, who disengaged himself from the quarryman, a large glass phial of a peculiar form, very thick, and filled with a greenish liquor, fell from his pocket and rolled close to the dying Goliath.

At sight of this phial, many voices exclaimed together:

"It is poison! Only see! He had poison upon him!"

The clamor redoubled at this accusation, and they pressed so close to Abbé d'Aigrigny that he exclaimed:

"Do not touch me! do not approach me!"

"If he is a poisoner," said a voice, "no more mercy for him than for the other."

"I a poisoner?" said the abbé, struck with horror.

Giboule had darted upon the phial; the quarryman seized it from her, uncorked it, and presenting it to Father d'Aigrigny, said to him:

"Now tell us! what is that?"

"It is not poison," cried Father d'Aigrigny.

"Then drink it!" returned the quarryman.

"Yes, yes! let him drink it!" cried the mob.

"Never!" answered Father d'Aigrigny, in extreme alarm. And he drew back as he spoke, pushing away the phial with his hand.

"Do you see? It *is* poison! He dare not drink it!" they exclaimed.

Hemmed in on every side, Father d'Aigrigny stumbled against the body of Goliath.

"My friends," cried the Jesuit, who, without being a poisoner, found himself exposed to a terrible alternative, for his phial contained aromatic salts of extraordinary strength, designed for a preservative against the cholera, and as dangerous to swallow as any poison, "my good friends, you are in error. I conjure you, in the name of heaven ——"

"If that is not poison, drink it!" interrupted the quarryman, as he again offered the bottle to the Jesuit.

"If he does not drink it, death to the poisoner of the poor!"

"Yes! — death to him!"

"Unhappy men!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, while his hair stood on end with terror; "do you mean to murder me?"

"What about all those that you and your mate have killed, you wretch?"

"But it is not true — and ——"

"Drink then!" repeated the inflexible quarryman; "I ask you for the last time."

"To drink that would be death," cried Father d'Aigrigny.

"Oh! only hear the wretch!" cried the mob, pressing closer to him; "he has confessed — he has confessed!"

"He has betrayed himself!"

"He said, 'To drink that would be death.'"

"But listen to me!" cried the abbé, clasping his hands together; "this phial is ——"

Furious cries interrupted Father d'Aigrigny.

"Ciboule, make an end of that one!" cried the quarryman, spurning Goliath with his foot. "I will begin this one!"

And he seized Father d'Aigrigny by the throat.

At these words, two different groups formed themselves. One, led by Ciboule, "made an end" of Goliath with kicks and blows, stones and wooden shoes; his body was soon reduced to a horrible thing, mutilated, nameless, formless—a mere inert mass of filth and mangled flesh. Ciboule gave her cloak, which they tied to one of the dislocated ankles of the body, and thus dragged it to the parapet of the quay. There, with shouts of ferocious joy, they precipitated the bloody remains into the river. Now who does not shudder at the thought that, in a time of popular commotion, a word, a single word, spoken imprudently, even by an honest man, and without hatred, will suffice to provoke so horrible a murder?

"*Perhaps it is a poisoner!*" said one of the drinkers in the tavern of the Rue de la Calandre—nothing more—and Goliath had been pitilessly murdered.

What imperious reasons for penetrating the lowest depths of the masses with instruction and with light—to enable unfortunate creatures to defend themselves from so many stupid prejudices, so many fatal superstitions, so much implacable fanaticism! How can we ask for calmness, reflection, self-control, or the sentiment of justice from abandoned beings whom ignorance has brutalized, and misery depraved, and suffering made ferocious, and of whom society takes no thought except when it chains them to the galleys or binds them ready for the executioner!

The terrible cry which had so startled Morok was uttered by Father d'Aigrigny as the quarryman laid his formidable hand upon him, saying to Ciboule:

"Make an end of that one; I will begin this one!"

CHAPTER X

IN THE CATHEDRAL



IGHT was almost come, as the mutilated body of Goliath was thrown into the river.

The oscillations of the mob had carried into the street, which runs along the left side of the cathedral, the group into whose power Father d'Aigrigny had fallen. Having succeeded in freeing himself from the grasp of the quarryman, but still closely pressed by the multitude that surrounded him, crying, "*Death to the poisoner!*" he retreated step by step, trying to parry the blows that were dealt him. By presence of mind, address, and courage, recovering at that critical moment his old military energy, he had hitherto been able to resist and to remain firm on his feet, knowing, by the example of Goliath, that to fall was to die. Though he had little hope of being heard to any purpose, the abbé continued to call for help with all his might. Disputing the ground inch by inch, he maneuvered so as to draw near one of the lateral walls of the church, and at length succeeded in ensconcing himself in a corner formed by the projection of a buttress and close by a little door.

This position was rather favorable. Leaning with his back against the wall, Father d'Aigrigny was sheltered from the attacks of a portion of his assailants. But the quarryman, wishing to deprive him of this last chance of safety, rushed upon him, with the intention of dragging him out into the circle, where he would have been trampled under foot. The fear of death gave Father d'Aigrigny extraordinary strength, and he was able once more to repulse the quarryman and remain intrenched in the corner where he had taken refuge. The resistance of the victim redoubled the rage of the assailants. Cries of murderous import resounded with new violence. The quarryman again rushed upon Father d'Aigrigny, saying :

"Follow me, friends! this lasts too long. Let us make an end of it."

Father d'Aigrigny saw that he was lost. His strength was exhausted

and he felt himself sinking; his legs trembled under him and a cloud obscured his sight; the howling of the furious mob began to sound dull upon his ear. The effects of violent contusions received during the struggle, both on the head and chest, were now very perceptible. Two or three times a mixture of blood and foam rose to the lips of the abbé; his position was a desperate one.

"To be slaughtered by these brutes, after escaping death so often in war!"

Such was the thought of Father d'Aigrigny as the quarryman rushed upon him.

Suddenly, at the very moment when the abbé, yielding to the instinct of self-preservation, uttered one last call for help in a heart-piercing voice, the door against which he leaned opened behind him, and a firm hand caught hold of him and pulled him into the church. Thanks to this movement, performed with the rapidity of lightning, the quarryman, thrown forward in his attempt to seize Father d'Aigrigny, could not check his progress, and found himself just opposite to the person who had come, as it were, to take the place of the victim.

The quarryman stopped short, and then fell back a couple of paces, so much was he amazed at this sudden apparition, and impressed, like the rest of the crowd, with a vague feeling of admiration and respect at sight of him who had come so miraculously to the aid of Father d'Aigrigny.

It was Gabriel.

The young missionary remained standing on the threshold of the door. His long black cassock was half lost in the shadows of the cathedral; while his angelic countenance, with its border of long light hair, now pale and agitated by pity and grief, was illumined by the last faint rays of twilight. This countenance shone with so divine a beauty, and expressed such tender and touching compassion, that the crowd felt awed, as, with his large blue eyes full of tears and his hands clasped together, he exclaimed, in a sonorous voice:

"Have mercy, my brethren! Be humane — be just!"

"Recovering from his first feeling of surprise and involuntary emotion, the quarryman advanced a step toward Gabriel and said to him:

"No mercy for the poisoner! we must have him. Give him up to us, or we go and take him!"

"You cannot think of it, my brethren," answered Gabriel; "the church is a sacred place — a place of refuge for the persecuted."

"We would drag our poisoner from the altar!" answered the quarryman roughly; "so give him up to us."

"Listen to me, my brethren," said Gabriel, extending his arms toward them.

"Down with the shaveling!" cried the quarryman; "let us go in and hunt him up in the church!"



"Yes, yes!" cried the mob, again led away by the violence of this wretch; "down with the blackgowns!"

"They are all of a piece!"

"Down with them!"

"Let us do as we did at the archbishop's!"

"Or at Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois!"

"What do our likes care for a church?"

"If the priests defend the poisoners we'll pitch them into the water too!"

"Yes, yes!"

"I'll show you the lead!" cried the quarryman; and, followed by Ciboule and a good number of determined men, he rushed toward Gabriel.

The missionary, who for some moments had watched the increasing fury of the crowd, had foreseen this movement; hastily retreating into the church, he succeeded, in spite of the efforts of the assailants, in nearly closing the door, and in barricading it by the help of a wooden bar, which he held in such a manner as would enable the door to resist for a few minutes.

While he thus defended the entrance, Gabriel shouted to Father d'Aigrigny:

"Fly, father! fly through the vestry! the other doors are fastened."

The Jesuit, overpowered by fatigue, covered with contusions, bathed in cold sweat, feeling his strength altogether fail and too soon fancying himself in safety, had sunk half fainting into a chair. At the voice of Gabriel he rose with difficulty, and with a trembling step endeavored to reach the choir, separated from the rest of the church by an iron railing.

"Quick, father!" added Gabriel in alarm, using every effort to maintain the door, which was now vigorously assailed. "Make haste! In a few minutes it will be too late."

"All alone!" continued the missionary in despair, "alone to arrest the progress of these madmen!"

He was indeed alone. At the first outbreak of the attack three or four sacristans and other members of the establishment were in the church; but, struck with terror, and remembering the sack of the archbishop's palace and of Saint-Germain-l'Auxerrois, they had immediately taken flight. Some of them had concealed themselves in the organ-loft, and others fled into the vestry, the doors of which they locked after them, thus cutting off the retreat of Gabriel and Father d'Aigrigny.

The latter, bent double by pain, yet roused by the missionary's portentive warning, helping himself on by means of the chairs he met with on his passage, made vain efforts to reach the choir railing. After advancing a few steps, vanquished by his suffering, he staggered and fell upon the pavement, deprived of sense and motion. At the same

moment, Gabriel, in spite of the incredible energy with which the desire to save Father d'Aigrigny had inspired him, felt the door giving way beneath the formidable pressure from without.

Turning his head to see if the Jesuit had at least quitted the church, Gabriel, to his great alarm, perceived that he was lying motionless at a few steps from the choir. To abandon the half-broken door, to run to Father d'Aigrigny, to lift him in his arms, and drag him within the railing of the choir, was for the young priest an action rapid as thought; for he closed the gate of the choir just at the instant that the quarryman and his band, having finished breaking down the door, rushed in a body into the church.

Standing in front of the choir, with his arms crossed upon his breast, Gabriel waited calmly and intrepidly for this mob, still more exasperated by such unexpected resistance.

The door once forced, the assailants rushed in with great violence. But hardly had they entered the church than a strange scene took place.

It was nearly dark; only a few silver lamps shed their pale light round the sanctuary, whose far outlines disappeared in shadow. On suddenly entering the immense cathedral, dark, silent, and deserted, the most audacious were struck with awe, almost with fear, in presence of the imposing grandeur of that stony solitude. Outcries and threats died away on the lips of the most furious. They seemed to dread awaking the echoes of those enormous arches, those black vaults, from which oozed a sepulchral dampness which chilled their brows, inflamed with anger, and fell upon their shoulders like a mantle of ice.

Religious tradition, routine, habit, the memories of childhood, have so much influence upon men, that hardly had they entered the church than several of the quarryman's followers respectfully took off their hats, bowed their bare heads, and walked along cautiously, as if to check the noise of their footsteps on the sounding stones.

Then they exchanged a few words in a low and fearful whisper.

Others timidly raised their eyes to the far heights of the topmost arches of that gigantic building, now lost in obscurity, and felt almost frightened to see themselves so little in the midst of that immensity of darkness.

But at the first joke of the quarryman, who broke this respectful silence, the emotion soon passed away.

"Blood and thunder!" cried he; "are you fetching breath to sing vespers? If they had wine in the font, well and good!"

These words were received with a burst of savage laughter.

"All this time the villain will escape," said one.

"And we shall be done," added Ciboule.

"One would think we had cowards here, who are afraid of the sacristians!" cried the quarryman.

"Never!" replied the others in chorus; "we fear nobody."

"Forward!"

"Yes, yes—forward!" was repeated on all sides. And the animation, which had been calmed down for a moment, was redoubled in the midst of renewed tumult. Some moments after, the eyes of the assailants, becoming accustomed to the twilight, were able to distinguish, in the midst of the faint halo shed around by a silver lamp, the imposing countenance of Gabriel, as he stood before the iron railing of the choir.

"The poisoner is here, hid in some corner," cried the quarryman. "We must force this parson to give us back the villain."

"He shall answer for him!"

"He took him into the church."

"He shall pay for both, if we do not find the other!"

As the first impression of involuntary respect was effaced from the minds of the crowd their voices rose the louder, and their faces became the more savage and threatening, because they all felt ashamed of their momentary hesitation and weakness.

"Yes, yes!" cried many voices, trembling with rage, "we must have the life of one or the other!"

"Or of both!"

"So much the worse for this priest, if he wants to prevent us from serving out our poisoner!"

"Death to him! death to him!"

With this burst of ferocious yells, which were fearfully reëchoed from the groined arches of the cathedral, the mob, maddened by rage, rushed toward the choir, at the door of which Gabriel was standing.

The young missionary, who, when placed on the cross by the savages of the Rocky Mountains, yet entreated Heaven to spare his executioners, had too much courage in his heart, too much charity in his soul, not to risk his life a thousand times over to save Father d'Aigrigny's—the very man who had betrayed him by such cowardly and cruel hypocrisy.

CHAPTER XI

THE MURDERERS

THE quarryman, followed by his gang, ran toward Gabriel, who had advanced a few paces from the choir-railing, and exclaimed, his eyes sparkling with rage:

“Where is the poisoner? We will have him!”

“Who has told you, my brethren, that he is a poisoner?” replied Gabriel, with his deep, sonorous voice. “A poisoner! Where are the proofs — witnesses, or victims?”

“Enough of that stuff! we are not here for confession,” brutally answered the quarryman, advancing toward him in a threatening manner. “Give up the man to us; he shall be forthcoming, unless you choose to stand in his shoes?”

“Yes, yes!” exclaimed several voices; “they are ‘in’ with one another! One or the other we will have!”

“Very well, then, since it is so,” said Gabriel, raising his head and advancing with calmness, resignation, and fearlessness; “he or me,” added he; — “it seems to make no difference to you — you are determined to have blood — take mine and I will pardon you, my friends, for a fatal delusion has unsettled your reason.”

These words of Gabriel, his courage, the nobleness of his attitude, the beauty of his countenance, had made an impression on some of the assailants, when suddenly a voice exclaimed:

“Look! there is the poisoner, behind the railing.”

“Where — where?” cried they.

“There — don’t you see? — stretched on the floor.”

On hearing this, the mob, which had hitherto formed a compact mass in the sort of passage separating the two sides of the nave, between the rows of chairs, dispersed in every direction to reach the railing of the choir, the last and only barrier that now sheltered Father d’Aigrigny.

During this maneuver the quarryman, Ciboile, and others advanced toward Gabriel, exclaiming with ferocious joy:

"This time we have him. Death to the poisoner!"

To save Father d'Aigrigny, Gabriel would have allowed himself to be massacred at the entrance of the choir; but a little further on the railing, not above four feet in height, would in another instant be scaled or broken through. The missionary lost all hope of saving the Jesuit from a frightful death. Yet he exclaimed:

"Stop, poor deluded people!"

And, extending his arms, he threw himself in front of the crowd.

His words, gestures, and countenance were expressive of an authority at once so affectionate and so fraternal that there was a momentary hesitation amongst the mob. But to this hesitation soon succeeded the most furious cries of —

"Death! death!"

"You cry for his death?" cried Gabriel, growing still paler.

"Yes, yes!"

"Well, let him die," cried the missionary, inspired with a sudden thought; "let him die on the instant."

These words of the young priest struck the crowd with amazement. For a few moments they all stood mute, motionless, and, as it were, paralyzed, looking at Gabriel in stupid astonishment.

"This man is guilty, you say," resumed the young missionary, in a voice trembling with emotion. "You have condemned him without proof, without witnesses—no matter, he must die. You reproach him with being a poisoner; where are his victims? You cannot tell—but no matter, he is condemned. You refuse to hear his defense, the sacred right of every accused person—no matter, the sentence is pronounced. You are at once his accusers, judges, and executioners. Be it so! You have never seen till now this unfortunate man, he has done you no harm, he has perhaps not done harm to any one, yet you take upon yourselves the terrible responsibility of his death—understand me well—of his death. Be it so, then! your conscience will absolve you—I will believe it. He must die; the sacredness of God's house will not save him ——"

"No, no!" cried many furious voices.

"No," resumed Gabriel, with increasing warmth; "no, you have determined to shed his blood and you will shed it, even in the Lord's temple. It is, you say, your right. You are doing an act of terrible justice. But why, then, so many vigorous arms to make an end of one dying man? Why these outcries? this fury? this violence? Is it thus that the people, the strong and equitable people, are wont to execute their judgments? No, no; when, sure of their right, they strike their enemies, it is with the calmness of the judge, who, in freedom of soul

and conscience, passes sentence. No, the strong and equitable people do not deal their blows like men blind or mad, uttering cries of rage, as if to drown the sense of some cowardly and horrible murder. No, it is not thus that they exercise the formidable right to which you now lay claim—for you will have it——”

“Yes, we will have it!” shouted the quarryman, Ciboule, and others of the more pitiless portion of the mob; while a great number remained silent, struck with the words of Gabriel, who had just painted to them in such lively colors the frightful act they were about to commit.

“Yes,” resumed the quarryman, “it is our right; we have determined to kill the poisoner!”

So saying, and with bloodshot eyes and flushed cheeks, the wretch advanced at the head of a resolute group, making a gesture as though he would have pushed aside Gabriel, who was still standing in front of the railing. But, instead of resisting the bandit, the missionary advanced a couple of steps to meet him, took him by the arm, and said in a firm voice:

“Come!”

And dragging, as it were, with him the stupefied quarryman, whose companions did not venture to follow at the moment, struck dumb as they were by this new incident, Gabriel rapidly traversed the space which separated him from the choir, opened the iron gate, and, still holding the quarryman by the arm, led him up to the prostrate form of Father d'Aigrigny, and said to him:

“There is the victim. He is condemned. Strike!”

“I!” cried the quarryman, hesitating; “I—all alone!”

“Oh!” replied Gabriel, with bitterness, “there is no danger. You can easily finish him. Look! he is broken down with suffering; he has hardly a breath of life left; he will make no resistance. Do not be afraid!”

The quarryman remained motionless, while the crowd, strangely impressed with this incident, approached a little nearer the railing, without daring to come within the gate.

“Strike then!” resumed Gabriel, addressing the quarryman, while he pointed to the crowd with a solemn gesture; “there are the judges; you are the executioner.”

“No!” cried the quarryman, drawing back and turning away his eyes; “I’m not the executioner; not I!”

The crowd remained silent. For a few moments, not a word, not a cry disturbed the stillness of the solemn cathedral.

In a desperate case, Gabriel had acted with a profound knowledge of the human heart. When the multitude, inflamed with blind rage,

rushes with ferocious clamor upon a single victim, and each man strikes his blow, this dreadful species of combined murder appears less horrible to each, because they all share in the common crime; and then the shouts, the sight of blood, the desperate defense of the man they massacre, finish by producing a sort of ferocious intoxication; but, amongst all those furious madmen who take part in the homicide, select one and place him face to face with the victim, no longer capable of resistance, and say to him, "Strike!"—he will hardly ever dare to do so.

It was thus with the quarryman; the wretch trembled at the idea of committing a murder in cold blood, "all alone."

The preceding scene had passed very rapidly; amongst the companions of the quarryman nearest to the railing, some did not understand an impression, which they would themselves have felt as strongly as this bold man, if it had been said to them, "Do the office of executioner!" These, therefore, began to murmur aloud at his weakness.

"He dares not finish the poisoner," said one.

"The coward!"

"He is afraid."

"He draws back."

Hearing these words, the quarryman ran to the gate, threw it wide open, and, pointing to Father d'Aigrigny, exclaimed:

"If there is one here braver than I am, let him go and finish the job, let him be the executioner—come!"

On this proposal the murmurs ceased. A deep silence reigned once more in the cathedral. All those countenances, but now so furious, became sad, confused, almost frightened. The deluded mob began to appreciate the ferocious cowardice of the action it had been about to commit. Not one durst go alone to strike the half-expiring man. Suddenly, Father d'Aigrigny uttered a dying rattle, his head and one of his arms stirred with a convulsive movement, and then fell back upon the stones as if he had just expired.

Gabriel uttered a cry of anguish and threw himself on his knees close to Father d'Aigrigny, exclaiming:

"Great Heaven! he is dead!"

There is a singular variableness in the mind of a crowd, susceptible alike to good or evil impressions. At the heart-piercing cry of Gabriel, all these people, who a moment before had demanded with loud uproar the massacre of this man, felt touched with a sudden pity. The words "*He is dead!*" circulated in low whispers through the crowd, accompanied by a slight shudder, while Gabriel raised with one hand the victim's heavy head, and with the other sought to feel if the pulse still beat beneath the ice-cold skin.

"M. le Curé," said the quarryman, bending toward Gabriel, "is there really no hope?"

The answer was waited for with anxiety, in the midst of deep silence. The people hardly ventured to exchange a few words in whispers.



"Blessed be God!" exclaimed Gabriel suddenly. "His heart beats."

"His heart beats," repeated the quarryman, turning his head toward the crowd, to inform them of the good news.

"Oh! his heart beats!" repeated the others in whispers.

"There is hope. We may yet save him," added Gabriel with an expression of indescribable happiness.

"We may yet save him," repeated the quarryman mechanically.

"We may yet save him," muttered the crowd.

"Quick, quick!" resumed Gabriel, addressing the quarryman; "help me, brother. Let us carry him to a neighboring house, where he can have immediate aid."

The quarryman obeyed with readiness. While the missionary lifted Father d'Aigrigny by holding him under the arms, the quarryman took the legs of the almost inanimate body. Together they carried him outside of the choir.

At sight of the formidable quarryman aiding the young priest to render assistance to the man whom he had just before pursued with menaces of death, the multitude felt a sudden thrill of compassion. Yielding to the powerful influence of the words and example of Gabriel, they felt themselves deeply moved, and each became anxious to offer his services.

"M. le Curé, he would, perhaps, be better on a chair that one could carry upright," said Ciboule.

"Shall I go and fetch a stretcher from the hospital?" asked another.

"M. le Curé, let me take your place; the body is too heavy for you."

"Don't trouble yourself," said a powerful man, approaching the missionary respectfully; "I can carry him alone."

"Shall I run and fetch a coach?" said a young vagabond, taking off his red cap.

"Right," said the quarryman; "run away, my buck!"

"But first ask M. le Curé if you are to go for a coach," said Ciboule, stopping the impatient messenger.

"True," added one of the bystanders; "we are here in a church, and he has the command. He is at home."

"Yes, yes; go at once, my child," said Gabriel to the obliging young vagabond.

While the latter was making his way through the crowd a voice said:

"I've a little wicker-bottle of brandy; will that be of any use?"

"No doubt," answered Gabriel hastily; "pray give it here. We can rub his temples with the spirit and make him inhale a little."

"Pass the bottle," cried Ciboule; "but don't put your noses in it!"

And, passed with caution from hand to hand, the flask reached Gabriel in safety.

While waiting for the coming of the coach, Father d'Aigrigny had

been seated on a chair. While several good-natured people carefully supported the abbé, the missionary made him inhale a little brandy. In a few minutes the spirit had a powerful influence on the Jesuit; he made some slight movements, and his oppressed bosom heaved with a deep sigh.

"He is saved—he will live," cried Gabriel, in a triumphant voice; "he will live, my brothers!"

"Oh! glad to hear it!" exclaimed many voices.

"Oh, yes! be glad, my brothers!" repeated Gabriel; "for instead of being weighed down with the remorse of crime, you will have a just and charitable action to remember. Let us thank God that he has changed your blind fury into a sentiment of compassion! Let us pray to Him that neither you nor those you love may ever be exposed to such frightful danger as this unfortunate man has just escaped. Oh, my brothers!" added Gabriel, as he pointed to the image of Christ with touching emotion, which communicated itself the more easily to others from the expression of his angelic countenance—"oh, my brothers! let us never forget that HE who died upon that cross for the defense of the oppressed, for the obscure children of the people like to ourselves, pronounced those affectionate words so sweet to the heart: 'Love ye one another!' Let us never forget it; let us love and help one another, and we poor people shall then become better, happier, just. Love—yes, love ye one another, and fall prostrate before that Saviour who is the God of all that are weak, oppressed, and suffering in this world!"

So saying, Gabriel knelt down. All present respectfully followed his example, such power was there in his simple and persuasive words.

At this moment, a singular incident added to the grandeur of the scene. We have said that a few seconds before the quarryman and his band entered the body of the church, several persons had fled from it. Two of these had taken refuge in the organ-loft, from which retreat they had viewed the preceding scene, themselves remaining invisible. One of these persons was a young man charged with the care of the organ, and quite musician enough to play on it. Deeply moved by the unexpected turn of an event which at first appeared so tragical, and yielding to an artistical inspiration, this young man, at the moment when he saw the people kneeling with Gabriel, could not forbear striking the notes. Then a sort of harmonious sigh, at first almost insensible, seemed to rise from the midst of this immense cathedral, like a divine aspiration. As soft and aerial as the balmy vapor of incense, it mounted and spread through the lofty arches. Little by little the faint, sweet sounds, though still, as it were, covered, changed to an exquisite melody, religious, melancholy, and affectionate, which rose

to heaven like a song of ineffable gratitude and love ; and the notes were at first so faint, so covered, that the kneeling multitude had scarcely felt surprise, and had yielded insensibly to the irresistible influence of that enchanting harmony. Then many an eye, until now dry and ferocious, became wet with tears ; many hard hearts beat gently as they remembered the words pronounced by Gabriel with so tender an accent : “ *Love ye one another !* ”

It was at this moment that Father d'Aigrigny came to himself and opened his eyes. He thought himself under the influence of a dream. He had lost his senses in sight of a furious populace who, with insult and blasphemy on their lips, pursued him with cries of death even to the sanctuary of the temple. He opened his eyes, and by the pale light of the sacred lamps, to the solemn music of the organ, he saw that crowd, just now so menacing and implacable, kneeling in mute and reverential emotion, and humbly bowing their heads before the majesty of the shrine.

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Some minutes after, Gabriel, carried almost in triumph on the shoulders of the crowd, entered the coach in which Father d'Aigrigny, who by degrees had completely recovered his senses, was already reclining. By the order of the Jesuit, the coach stopped before the door of a house in the Rue de Vaugirard ; he had the strength and courage to enter this dwelling alone ; Gabriel was not admitted, but we shall conduct the reader thither.

CHAPTER XII

THE WALK



At the end of the Rue de Vaugirard there was then a very high wall, with only one small doorway in all its length. On opening this door you entered a yard surrounded by a railing, with screens like Venetian blinds, to prevent your seeing between the rails. Crossing this court-yard, you come to a fine large garden, symmetrically planted, at the end of which stood a building two stories high, looking perfectly comfortable, without luxury, but with all that cozy simplicity which betokens discreet opulence.

A few days had elapsed since Father d'Aigrigny had been so courageously rescued by Gabriel from the popular fury. Three ecclesiastics, wearing black gowns, white bands, and square caps, were walking in the garden with a slow and measured step. The youngest seemed to be about thirty years of age; his countenance was pale, hollow, and impressed with a certain ascetic austerity. His two companions, aged between fifty and sixty, had, on the contrary, faces at once hypocritical and cunning; their round, rosy cheeks shone brightly in the sunshine, while their triple chins, buried in fat, descended in soft folds over the fine cambric of their bands. According to the rules of their Order (they belonged to the Society of Jesus), which forbade their walking only two together, these three members of the Brotherhood never quitted each other a moment.

"I fear," said one of the two, continuing a conversation already begun, and speaking of an absent person,—*"I fear that the continual agitation to which the reverend father has been a prey ever since he was attacked with the cholera has exhausted his strength, and caused the dangerous relapse which now makes us fear for his life."*

"They say," resumed the other, "that never was there seen anxiety like to his."

"And moreover," remarked the young priest, bitterly "it is painful to think that his reverence, Father Rodin, has given cause for scandal

by obstinately refusing to make a public confession the day before yesterday, when his situation appeared so desperate that, between two fits of delirium, it was thought right to propose to him to receive the last sacraments."

"His reverence declared that he was not so ill as they supposed," answered one of the fathers, "and that he would have the last duties performed when he thought necessary."

"The fact is, that for the last ten days, ever since he was brought here dying, his life has been, as it were, only a long and painful agony; and yet he continues to live."

"I watched by him during the first three days of his malady, with M. Rousselet, the pupil of Dr. Baleinier," resumed the youngest father; "he had hardly a moment's consciousness, and when the Lord did grant him a lucid interval, he employed it in detestable execrations against the fate which had confined him to his bed."

"It is said," resumed the other, "that Father Rodin made answer to his eminence, Cardinal Malipieri, who came to persuade him to die in an exemplary manner, worthy of a son of Loyola, our blessed founder"—at these words, the three Jesuits bowed their heads together, as if they had been all moved by the same spring—"it is said that Father Rodin made answer to his eminence: '*I do not need to confess publicly; I WANT TO LIVE, AND I will LIVE.*'"

"I did not hear that," said the young priest with an indignant air; "but if Father Rodin really made use of such expressions, it is ——"

Here, no doubt, reflection came to him just in time, for he stole a sidelong glance at his two silent, impassible companions, and added:

"It is a great misfortune for his soul; but I am certain his reverence has been slandered."

"It was only as a calumnious report that I mentioned those words," said the other priest, exchanging a glance with his companion.

A long silence followed this remark. While thus conversing, the three Jesuits were walking on a long alley, at the center of which, where other avenues radiated, was a large round stone slab. On this table a man in an ecclesiastical costume was kneeling, and on his back and breast were two large placards, one inscribed in large letters, *INSUBMISSIVE*; the other, *CARNAL*.

The reverend father who, in obedience to the rule, was undergoing during the hour of exercise this school-boy punishment, was a man of forty, built like Hercules, with a bull neck, black curly hair, and swarthy face; and although he kept his eyes on the ground, it could be seen from the frequent contractions of his shaggy eyebrows that his real feelings were not in accord with his outward resignation.

Besides the fathers who were exercising in the garden, some laymen were visible. The Jesuits possessed an adjoining house, separated from their own by a hedge, and in it numerous penitents came to make their "retreats;" and here they found a charming combination of the confessional and furnished rooms, of sermons and a table d'hôte, where body and soul were attended to at so much a head, and where dispensations from fasting were charged in the bill after the coffee and eau-de-vie.

One of the reverend fathers, in allusion to the presence of these laymen, and anxious, besides, to break an embarrassing silence, said to a young priest of a stern and fanatical appearance:

"The last boarder but one, who was brought here wounded, continues to show himself refractory, for I do not see him with the others."

"Perhaps," replied the other, "he prefers to walk by himself in the other garden."

"I do not believe that the man, since he entered our retreat, has ever set foot outside of the isolated pavilion which he occupies. Father d'Aigrigny, who alone sees him, complains of apathy; and he has not been seen once in the chapel."

"Perhaps he is not in a condition to go."

"On the contrary," rejoined the other, "I heard Dr. Baleinier say that exercise would be of great benefit, but that he obstinately refused to quit his chamber."

"Do you know the name of this boarder?" inquired one of the three fathers.

"During the fortnight he has been here I only have heard him called 'the gentleman in the pavilion.'"

"One of the servants describes him as a man of sweet disposition, apparently affected with deep sadness; he almost never speaks, passes hours with his head between his hands, likes the house well enough, prefers a half-light to day, and, by a strange peculiarity, finds the glow of a fire so unbearable that, cold as it has been, he will not have one kindled in his room."

"He is a lunatic, perhaps."

"No; the servant says he is quite sane; but the fire seems to recall some painful memory."

"Father d'Aigrigny ought to know more about him than any one, for nearly every day he has a long interview with him."

"Father d'Aigrigny has not seen him for at least three days, for he has not left his room since he was brought back the other evening seriously indisposed."

"True," replied the other; "but to return to what our dear brother observed. It is strange that this unknown has not come to chapel. . . ."

"Perhaps it is a case of conversion."

To listen to this childish chatter about third persons, it might be imagined that the three reverend fathers were vulgar men of moderate abilities. This would have been an error; for this exchange of commonplaces arose from the system of mutual espionage.

But, thanks to the obligation of mutual *spying* imposed upon each, thanks to the hateful suspicions which resulted from it, and in the midst of which these priests were living, they never spoke together but of trifles not worth reporting, reserving all the resources and faculties of their mind, passively to execute the will of their chief, and able to unite, in the execution of the orders they received, the most absolute and blind obedience as to the end with the most inventive and diabolical dexterity as to the means.

Thus, it would be difficult to reckon the number of rich donations and inheritances which the two reverend fathers with the jolly countenances had brought into the ever-open, ever-gaping, ever-greedy money-bag of the corporation,—employing, to effect these prodigious feats of legerdemain, directed against the weak, the sick, and the dying, sometimes blessed seductions, holy coaxing, promises of nice little places in Paradise, and sometimes calumny, threats, and terror.

The youngest of the three reverend fathers, endowed with a pale, lean face, a dark, fanatical look, a bitter and intolerant mode of speech, was a sort of standing specimen of asceticism, a living sample, sent forth by the Company on certain occasions, when it was thought necessary to persuade *simple* men that no life can be more austere than that of the sons of Loyola, and that by abstinence and mortification they become like so many anchorites—a belief which the other two fathers, with their large paunches and rosy cheeks, would have found some difficulty in propagating. In a word, as in the old companies of comedians, each had, as dearly as possible, the appearance best suited to the part he had to play.

Discoursing as we have described, the reverend fathers reached a building close to the principal habitation, but arranged as a sort of shop. The communication with this place was by a private entrance, which a high wall rendered invisible. Through an open, grated window might be heard the almost continual chink of money; sometimes it sounded as if crowns were poured from a bag upon a table, sometimes as if they were laid in piles.

In this building was the commercial treasury, into which was paid the price of the books, engravings, chaplets, etc., manufactured by the congregation, and spread in profusion through France by the assistance of the Church—books almost always stupid, insolent, licentious, or

false—detestable works, in which all that is great and noble, illustrious and glorious in the history of our immortal republic, is falsified, ridiculed and insulted in the language of the lowest people. As for the



engravings, representing modern miracles, they are announced with a burlesque effrontery which surpasses the most absurd placards of the mountebanks at a fair.

After listening mechanically to the chink of the metal, one of the

reverend fathers said with a smile : “ And to-day is one of small receipts. Our father-cashier said lately that the profits of the first three months had been eighty-three thousand francs.”

“ At least,” replied the young priest harshly, “ it is so much of the means of evil taken out of the hands of impiety.”

“ The impious may rebel, but religious people are with us,” resumed the other reverend father. “ Just see how, in spite of the cholera, the tickets of our pious lotteries are bought up; and every day new prizes are sent in. Yesterday we had a good harvest: Firstly, a little copy of a Venus in white marble—another gift would have been more modest, but the end justifies the means; secondly, a tooth of Saint Fructueux, in a little gold *reliquary*; fourthly, a rouge-box of the time of the Regency, in magnificent Coromande lacquer, ornamented with pearls.”

“ This morning,” added the other priest, “ we received an admirable prize. Imagine a magnificent poniard, with a silver-gilt handle; the blade is very broad and hollow; and, by means of an almost miraculous mechanism, it is no sooner plunged in the body than a number of little transverse blades start out with the force of the blow, and, being very sharp, pierce the flesh on all sides, and so fix themselves that it is impossible to draw out the *mother-blade*, if I may so express myself. I do not think it possible to conceive a more murderous weapon. The scabbard is in velvet, superbly adorned with carved plates of silver-gilt.”

“ Oh! oh!” said the other; “ that lot will be much sought after.”

“ I believe you,” answered the reverend father, “ and it has therefore been put, with the Venus and the rouge-box, amongst the great prizes of the Virgin.”

“ What do you mean?” said the other with astonishment. “ What are the prizes of the Virgin?”

“ What! don’t you know?”

“ I do not.”

“ It is a charming invention of Mother Sainte-Perpétue. Just fancy! the great prizes will be drawn by a little image of the Virgin, made to go by clock-work, which will give it a circular kind of movement for some seconds, and on whatever number it stops, *that* will gain the prize.”

“ Ah! it is really charming!” said the other priest. “ The idea is so appropriate. I was not aware of these details. But do you know the price of the chalice which this lottery is to purchase?”

“ I am told that, including jewels, it will not come to less than thirty-five thousand francs, without reckoning the gold of the former one, valued at nine thousand francs.”

“ The lottery will bring in forty thousand francs, so that we are all

right," answered the other. "At all events, our chapel will no longer be eclipsed by the insolent luxury of the *Lazarists*."

"On the contrary, they will now have to envy us; for their fine chalice of pure gold, of which they were so proud, is not worth the half of the one we shall get by our lottery, since ours is not only larger, but adorned with precious stones."

This interesting conversation was here unfortunately interrupted. It was so edifying to hear the priests of a religion of poverty and humility, modesty and charity, have recourse to gambling transactions prohibited by the law, and beg the assistance of the public in order to deck their altars with revolting luxury, while thousands of their fellow-creatures were dying of hunger and misery at the doors of their splendid chapels.

One of the garden gates opened, and one of the three reverend fathers exclaimed, at sight of the personage who now entered: "Oh! here is his eminence, Cardinal Malipieri, coming to pay a visit to Father Rodin."

"May this visit of his eminence," said the young priest calmly, "be more profitable to Father Rodin than the last!"

Cardinal Malipieri was crossing the garden on his way to the apartment occupied by Rodin.

CHAPTER XIII

THE PATIENT



ARDINAL MALIPIERI, whom we saw assisting at the sort of council held at the Princess de Saint-Dizier's, now on his way to Rodin's apartment, was dressed as a layman, but enveloped in an ample pelisse of puce-colored satin, which exhaled a strong odor of camphor, for the prelate had taken care to surround himself with all sorts of anti-cholera specifics.

Having reached the second story of the house, the cardinal knocked at a little gray door. Nobody answering, he opened it, and, like a man to whom the locality was well-known, passed through a sort of ante-chamber and entered a room in which was a turned-up bed. On a black wood table were many phials, which had contained different medicines. The prelate's countenance seemed uneasy and morose; his complexion was still yellow and bilious; the brown circle which surrounded his black, squinting eyes appeared still darker than usual.

Pausing a moment, he looked round him almost in fear, and several times stopped to smell at his anti-cholera bottle. Then, seeing he was alone, he approached a glass over the chimney-piece and examined with much attention the color of his tongue; after some minutes spent in this careful investigation, with the result of which he appeared tolerably satisfied, he took some preservative lozenges out of a golden box and allowed them to melt in his mouth, while he closed his eyes with a sanctified air. Having taken these sanitary precautions, and again pressed his bottle to his nose, the prelate prepared to enter the third room, when he heard a tolerably loud noise through the thin partition which separated him from it, and, stopping to listen, all that was said in the next apartment easily reached his ear.

"Now that my wounds are dressed, I will get up," said a weak, but sharp and imperious voice.

"Do not think of it, reverend father," was answered in a stronger tone; "it is impossible."

"You shall see if it is impossible," replied the other voice.

"But, reverend father, you will kill yourself. You are not in a state to get up. You will expose yourself to a mortal relapse. I cannot consent to it."

To these words succeeded the noise of a faint struggle, mingled with groans more angry than plaintive, and the voice resumed:

"No, no, father; for your own safety, I will not leave your clothes within your reach. It is almost time for your medicine; I will go and prepare it for you."

Almost immediately after, the door opened, and the prelate saw enter a man of about twenty-five years of age, carrying on his arm an old olive great-coat and threadbare black trousers, which he threw down upon a chair.

This personage was Ange Modeste Rousselet, chief pupil of Dr. Baleinier; the countenance of the young practitioner was mild, humble, and reserved; his hair, very short in front, flowed down his neck behind. He made a slight start in surprise on perceiving the cardinal, and bowed twice very low, without raising his eyes.

"Before anything else," said the prelate, with his marked Italian accent, still holding to his nose his bottle of camphor, "have any choleraic symptoms returned?"

"No, my lord; the pernicious fever which succeeded the attack of cholera still continues."

"Very good. But will not the reverend father be reasonable? What was the noise that I just heard?"

"His reverence wished absolutely to get up and dress himself; but his weakness is so great that he could not have taken two steps from the bed. He is devoured by impatience, and we fear that this agitation will cause a mortal relapse."

"Has Dr. Baleinier been here this morning?"

"He has just left, my lord."

"What does he think of the patient?"

"He finds him in the most alarming state, my lord. The night was so bad that he was extremely uneasy this morning. Father Rodin is at one of those critical junctures when a few hours may decide the life or death of the patient. Dr. Baleinier is now gone to fetch what is necessary for a very painful operation which he is about to perform on the reverend father."

"Has Father d'Aigrigny been told of this?"

"Father d'Aigrigny is himself very unwell, as your eminence knows; he has not been able to leave his bed for the last three days."

"I inquired about him as I came up," answered the prelate, "and I

shall see him directly. But, to return to Father Rodin, have you sent for his confessor, since he is in a desperate state and about to undergo a serious operation?"

"Dr. Baleinier spoke a word to him about it, as well as about the last sacraments; but Father Rodin exclaimed, with great irritation, that they did not leave him a moment's peace, that he had as much care as any one for his salvation, and that ——"

"*Per Bacco!* I am not thinking of him," cried the cardinal, interrupting Ange Modeste Rousselet with his pagan oath, and raising his sharp voice to a still higher key; "I am not thinking of him, but of the interests of the Company. It is indispensable that the reverend father should receive the sacraments with the most splendid solemnity, and that his end should not only be Christian but exemplary. All the people in the house, and even strangers, should be invited to the spectacle, so that his edifying death may produce an excellent sensation."

"That is what Fathers Grison and Brunet have already endeavored to persuade his reverence, my lord; but your eminence knows with what impatience Father Rodin received this advice, and Dr. Baleinier did not venture to persist, for fear of advancing a fatal crisis."

"Well, I will venture to do it; for in these times of revolutionary impiety, a solemnly Christian death would produce a very salutary effect on the public. It would indeed be proper to make the necessary preparations to embalm the reverend father; he might then lie in state for some days, with lighted tapers, according to Roman custom. My secretary would furnish the design for the bier; it would be very splendid and imposing; from his position in the Order, Father Rodin is entitled to have everything in the most sumptuous style. He must have at least six hundred tapers, and a dozen funeral lamps, burning spirits of wine, to hang just over the body and light it from above: the effect would be excellent. We must also distribute little tracts to the people concerning the pious and ascetic life of his reverence ——"

Here a sudden noise, like that of some piece of metal thrown angrily on the floor, was heard from the next room, in which was the sick man, and interrupted the prelate in his description.

"I hope Father Rodin has not heard you talk of embalming him, my lord," said Rousselet, in a whisper; "his bed touches the partition, and almost everything is audible through it."

"If Father Rodin has heard me," answered the cardinal, sinking his voice, and retiring to the other end of the room, "this circumstance will enable me to enter at once on the business; but, in any case, I persist in believing that the embalming and the lying in state are required to make a good effect upon the public. The people are already frightened

at the cholera, and such funeral pomp would have no small influence on the imagination."

"I would venture to observe to your eminence that here the laws are opposed to such exhibitions."

"The laws—always the laws!" said the cardinal angrily; "has not Rome also her laws? And is not every priest a subject of Rome? Is it not time——"

But, not choosing, doubtless, to begin a more explicit conversation with the young doctor, the prelate resumed:

"We will talk of this hereafter. But, tell me, since my last visit, has the reverend father had any fresh attacks of delirium?"

"Yes, my lord; here is the note, as your eminence commanded."

So saying, Rousselet delivered a paper to the prelate. We will inform the reader that this part of the conversation between Rousselet and the cardinal was carried on at a distance from the partition, so that Rodin could hear nothing of it, while that which related to the embalming had been perfectly audible to him.

The cardinal, having received the note from Rousselet, perused it with an expression of lively curiosity. When he had finished, he crumpled it in his hand, and said without attempting to dissemble his vexation:

"Always nothing but incoherent expressions. Not two words together from which you can draw any reasonable conclusion. One would really think this man had the power to control himself even in his delirium, and to rave about insignificant matters only."

Then, addressing Rousselet:

"You are sure that you have reported everything that escaped from him during his delirium?"

"With the exception of the same phrases, that he repeated over and over again, your eminence may be assured that I have not omitted a single word, however unmeaning."

"Show me into Father Rodin's room," said the prelate, after a moment's silence.

"But, my lord," answered the young doctor, with some hesitation, "the fit has only left him about an hour, and the reverend father is still very weak."

"The more's the reason," replied the prelate, somewhat indiscreetly. Then, recollecting himself, he added:

"He will the better appreciate the consolations I have to offer. Should he be asleep, awake him and announce my visit."

"I have only orders to receive from your eminence," said Rousselet, bowing and entering the next room.

Left alone, the cardinal said to himself, with a pensive air:

"I always come back to that. When he was suddenly attacked by the cholera, Father Rodin believed himself poisoned by order of the Holy See. He must then have been plotting something very formidable against Rome, to entertain so abominable a fear. Can our suspicions be well founded? Is he acting secretly and powerfully on the Sacred College? But then for what end? This it has been impossible to penetrate, so faithfully has the secret been kept by his accomplices. I had hoped that during his delirium he would let slip some word that would put us on the trace of what we are so much interested to discover. With so restless and active a mind, delirium is often the exaggeration of some dominant idea; yet here I have the report of five different fits — and nothing — no, nothing but vague, unconnected phrases."

The return of Rousselet put an end to these reflections.

"I am sorry to inform my lord that the reverend father obstinately refuses to see any one. He says that he requires absolute repose. Though very weak he has a savage and angry look, and I should not be surprised if he overheard your eminence talk about embalming him."

The cardinal, interrupting Rousselet, said to him:

"Did Father Rodin have his last fit of delirium in the night?"

"Between three and half-past five this morning, my lord."

"Between three and half-past five," repeated the prelate, as if he wished to impress this circumstance on his memory; "the attack presented no particular symptoms?"

"No, my lord; it consisted of rambling, incoherent talk, as your eminence may see by this note."

Then, as he perceived the prelate approaching Father Rodin's door, Rousselet added:

"The reverend father will positively see no one, my lord; he requires rest to prepare for the operation; it might be dangerous ——"

Without attending to these observations, the cardinal entered Rodin's chamber. It was a tolerably large room, lighted by two windows, and simply but commodiously furnished. Two logs were burning slowly in the fire-place, in which stood a coffee-pot, a vessel containing mustard-poultice, etc. On the chimney-piece were several pieces of rag, and some linen bandages. The room was full of that faint, chemical odor peculiar to the chambers of the sick, mingled with so putrid a stench that the cardinal stopped at the door a moment before he ventured to advance farther. As the three reverend fathers had mentioned in their walk, Rodin lived because he had said to himself, "I want to live, and I will live."

For, as men of timid imaginations and cowardly minds often die

from the mere dread of dying, so a thousand facts prove that vigor of character and moral energy may often struggle successfully against disease and triumph over the most desperate symptoms.



It was thus with the Jesuit. The unshaken firmness of his character, the formidable tenacity of his will (for the will has sometimes a mysterious and almost terrific power), aiding the skillful treatment of Dr. Baleinier, had saved him from the pestilence with which he had

been so suddenly attacked. But the shock had been succeeded by a violent fever, which placed Rodin's life in the utmost peril. This increased danger had caused the greatest alarm to Father d'Aigrigny, who felt, in spite of his rivalry and jealousy, that Rodin was the master-spirit of the plot in which they were engaged, and could alone conduct it to a successful issue.

The curtains of the room were half closed, and admitted only a doubtful light to the bed on which Rodin was lying. The Jesuit's features had lost the greenish hue peculiar to cholera-patients, but remained perfectly livid and cadaverous, and so thin that the dry, rugged skin appeared to cling to the smallest prominence of bone. The muscles and veins of the long, lean, vulture-like neck resembled a bundle of cords. The head, covered with an old, black, filthy night-cap, from beneath which strayed a few thin, gray hairs, rested upon a dirty pillow; for Rodin would not allow them to change his linen. His iron-gray beard had not been shaved for some time, and stood out like the hairs of a brush. Under his shirt he wore an old flannel waistcoat full of holes. He had one of his arms out of bed, and his bony, hairy hand, with its bluish nails, held fast a cotton handkerchief of indescribable color.

You might have taken him for a corpse, had it not been for the two brilliant sparks which still burned in the depths of his eyes. In that look, in which seemed centred all the remaining life and energy of the man, you might read the most restless anxiety. Sometimes his features revealed the sharpest pangs; sometimes the twisting of his hands, and his sudden starts, proclaimed his despair at being thus fettered to a bed of pain, while the serious interests which he had in charge required all the activity of his mind. Thus, with thoughts continually on the stretch, his mind often wandered, and he had fits of delirium, from which he woke as from a painful dream.

By the prudent advice of Dr. Baleinier, who considered him not in a state to attend to matters of importance, Father d'Aigrigny had hitherto evaded Rodin's questions with regard to the Rennepont affair, which he dreaded to see lost and ruined in consequence of his forced inaction. The silence of Father d'Aigrigny on this head, and the ignorance in which they kept him, only augmented the sick man's exasperation.

Such was the moral and physical state of Rodin when Cardinal Malipieri entered his chamber against his will.

CHAPTER XIV

THE SNARE

TO understand fully the tortures of Rodin, reduced to inactivity by sickness, and to explain the importance of Cardinal Malipieri's visit, we must remember the audacious views of the ambitious Jesuit, who believed himself following in the steps of Sixtus V., and expected to become his equal. By the success of the Remepont affair to attain to the generalship of his Order, by the corruption of the Sacred College to ascend the pontifical throne, and then, by means of a change in the statutes of the Company, to incorporate the Society of Jesus with the Holy See, instead of leaving it independent, to equal and almost always rule the Papacy — such were the secret projects of Rodin.

Their possibility was sanctioned by numerous precedents, for many mere monks and priests had been suddenly raised to the pontifical dignity. And as for their morality, the accession of the Borgias, of Julius II., and other dubious Vicars of Christ, might excuse and authorize the pretensions of the Jesuit.

Though the object of his secret intrigues at Rome had hitherto been enveloped in the greatest mystery, suspicions had been excited in regard to his private communications with many members of the Sacred College. A portion of that college, Cardinal Malipieri at the head of them, had become very uneasy on the subject, and, profiting by his journey to France, the cardinal had resolved to penetrate the Jesuit's dark designs. If, in the scene we have just painted, the cardinal showed himself so obstinately bent on having a conference with Rodin, in spite of the refusal of the latter, it was because the prelate hoped, as we shall soon see, to get by cunning at the secret which had hitherto been so well concealed. It was, therefore, in the midst of all these extraordinary circumstances that Rodin saw himself the victim of a malady which paralyzed his strength at the moment when he had need of all his activity, and of all the resources of his mind.

After remaining for some seconds motionless near the door, the cardinal, still holding his bottle under his nose, slowly approached the bed where Rodin lay.

The latter, enraged at this perseverance, and wishing to avoid an interview which for many reasons was singularly odious to him, turned his face toward the wall and pretended to be asleep. Caring little for this feint, and determined to profit by Rodin's state of weakness, the prelate took a chair, and, conquering his repugnance, sat down close to the Jesuit's bed.

"My reverend and very dear father, how do you find yourself?" said he to him in a honeyed tone, which his Italian accent seemed to render still more hypocritical.

Rodin pretended not to hear, breathed hard, and made no answer.

But the cardinal, not without disgust, shook with his gloved hand the arm of the Jesuit, and repeated in a louder voice:

"My reverend and very dear father, answer me, I conjure you!"

Rodin could not restrain a movement of angry impatience, but he continued silent.

The cardinal was not a man to be discouraged by so little; he again shook the arm of the Jesuit, somewhat more roughly, repeating, with a passionless tenacity that would have incensed the most patient person in the world:

"My reverend and very dear father, since you are not asleep, listen to me, I entreat of you."

Irritable with pain, exasperated by the obstinacy of the prelate, Rodin abruptly turned his head, fixed on the Roman his hollow eyes, shining with lurid fire, and, with lips contracted by a sardonic smile, said to him bitterly:

"You must be very anxious, my lord, to see me embalmed and lie in state with tapers, as you were saying just now, for you thus to come to torment me in my last moments and hasten my end!"

"Oh, my good father! how can you talk so?" cried the cardinal, raising his hands as if to call Heaven to witness to the sincerity of the tender interest he felt for the Jesuit.

"I tell you that I heard all just now, my lord; for the partition is thin," added Rodin, with redoubled bitterness.

"If you mean that, from the bottom of my soul, I desired that you should make an exemplary and Christian end, you are perfectly right, my dear father. I did say so; for, after a life so well employed, it would be sweet to see you an object of adoration for the faithful!"

"I tell you, my lord," cried Rodin, in a weak and broken voice, "that it is ferocious to express such wishes in the presence of a dying man.

Yes," he added, with growing animation, that contrasted strongly with his weakness, "take care what you do; for if I am too much plagued and pestered — if I am not allowed to breathe my last breath quietly — I give you notice that you will force me to die in anything but a Christian manner, and if you mean to profit by an edifying spectacle you will be deceived."

This burst of anger having greatly fatigued Rodin, his head fell back upon the pillow, and he wiped his cracked and bleeding lips with his old cotton handkerchief.

"Come, come, be calm, my very dear father," resumed the cardinal with a patronizing air; "do not give way to such gloomy ideas. Doubtless Providence reserves you for great designs, since you have been already delivered from so much peril. Let us hope that you will be likewise saved from your present danger."

Rodin answered by a hoarse growl and turned his face toward the wall.

The imperturbable prelate continued:

"The views of Providence are not confined to your salvation, my very dear father. Its power has been manifested in another way. What I am about to tell you is of the highest importance. Listen attentively."

Without turning his head, Rodin muttered in a tone of angry bitterness, which betrayed his intense sufferings:

"They desire my death. My chest is on fire, my head racked with pain, and they have no pity. Oh, I suffer the tortures of the damned!"

"What! *already*?" thought the Roman, with a smile of sarcastic malice; then he said aloud:

"Let me persuade you, my very dear father — make an effort to listen to me; you will not regret it."

Still stretched upon the bed, Rodin lifted his hands clasped upon his cotton handkerchief with a gesture of despair, and then let them fall again by his side.

The cardinal slightly shrugged his shoulders and laid great stress on what follows, so that Rodin might not lose a word of it:

"My dear father, it has pleased Providence that, during your fit of raving, you have made, without knowing it, the most important revelations."

The prelate waited with anxious curiosity for the effect of the pious trap he had laid for the Jesuit's weakened faculties. But the latter, still turned toward the wall, did not appear to have heard him, and remained silent.

"You are, no doubt, reflecting on my words, my dear father,"

resumed the cardinal; "you are right, for it concerns a very serious affair. I repeat to you that Providence has allowed you, during your delirium, to betray your most secret thoughts—happily, to me alone. They are such as would compromise you in the highest degree. In short, during your delirium of last night, which lasted nearly two hours, you unveiled the secret objects of your intrigues at Rome with many of the members of the Sacred College."

The cardinal, rising softly, stooped over the bed to watch the expression of Rodin's countenance. But the latter did not give him time. As a galvanized corpse starts into strange and sudden motion, Rodin sprang into a sitting posture at the last words of the prelate.

"He has betrayed himself," said the cardinal, in a low voice, in Italian. Then, resuming his seat, he fixed on the Jesuit his eyes, that sparkled with triumphant joy.

Though he did not hear the exclamation of Malipieri, nor remark the expression of his countenance, Rodin, notwithstanding his state of weakness, instantly felt the imprudence of his start. He pressed his hand to his forehead, as though he had been seized with a giddiness; then, looking wildly round him, he pressed to his trembling lips his old cotton handkerchief, and *gnawed* it mechanically for some seconds.

"Your emotion and alarm confirm the sad discoveries I have made," resumed the cardinal, still more rejoicing at the success of his trick; "and now, my dear father," added he, "you will understand that it is for your best interest to enter into the most minute detail as to your projects and accomplices at Rome. You may then hope, my dear father, for the indulgence of the Holy See—that is, if your avowals are sufficiently explicit to fill up the chasms necessarily left in a confession made during delirium."

Rodin, recovered from his first surprise, perceived, but too late, that he had fallen into a snare, not by any words he had spoken, but by his too significant movements. In fact, the Jesuit had feared for a moment that he might have betrayed himself during his delirium, when he heard himself accused of dark intrigues with Rome; but, after some minutes of reflection, his common sense suggested:

"If this crafty Roman knew my secret, he would take care not to tell me so. He has only suspicions, confirmed by my involuntary start just now."

Rodin wiped the cold sweat from his burning forehead. The emotion of this scene augmented his sufferings and aggravated the danger of his condition. Worn out with fatigue, he could not remain long in a sitting posture, and soon fell back upon the bed.

"*Per Bacco!*" said the cardinal to himself, alarmed at the expression

of the Jesuit's face; "if he were to die before he has spoken, and so escape the snare!"

Then leaning over the bed the prelate asked: "What is the matter, my very dear father?"

"I am weak, my lord—I am in pain—I cannot express what I suffer."

"Let us hope, my very dear father, that this crisis will have no fatal results, but the contrary may happen, and it behooves the salvation of your soul to make instantly the fullest confession. Were it even to exhaust your strength, what is this perishable body compared to eternal life?"

"Of what confession do you speak, my lord?" said Rodin, in a feeble and yet sarcastic tone.

"What confession?" cried the amazed cardinal; "why, with regard to your dangerous intrigues at Rome."

"What intrigues?" asked Rodin.

"The intrigues you revealed during your delirium," replied the prelate with still more angry impatience. "Were not your avowals sufficiently explicit? Why, then, this culpable hesitation to complete them?"

"My avowals—were explicit—you assure me?" said Rodin, pausing after each word for want of breath, but without losing his energy and presence of mind.

"Yes, I repeat it," resumed the cardinal; "with the exception of a few chasms, they were most explicit."

"Then why repeat them?" said Rodin, with the same sardonic smile on his violet lips.

"Why repeat them?" cried the angry prelate. "In order to gain pardon; for if there is indulgence and mercy for the repentant sinner, there must be condemnation and curses for the hardened criminal!"

"Oh, what torture! I am dying by slow fire!" murmured Rodin. "Since I have told all," he resumed, "I have nothing more to tell. You know it already."

"I know all—doubtless, I know all," replied the prelate, in a voice of thunder; "but how have I learned it? By confessions made in a state of unconsciousness. Do you think they will avail you anything? No; the moment is solemn—death is at hand; tremble to die with sacrilegious falsehood on your lips," cried the prelate, shaking Rodin violently by the arm; "dread the eternal flames, if you dare deny what you know to be the truth. Do you deny it?"

"I deny nothing," murmured Rodin, with difficulty. "Only leave me alone!"

"Then Heaven inspires you," said the cardinal with a sigh of satisfaction; and thinking he had nearly attained his object, he resumed:

"Listen to the divine word that will guide you, father. You deny nothing?"

"I was—delirious—and cannot—oh, how I suffer!" added Rodin, by way of parenthesis; "and cannot, therefore—deny—the nonsense—I may have uttered!"

"But when this nonsense agrees with the truth," cried the prelate, furious at being again deceived in his expectation; "but when raving is an involuntary, providential revelation——"

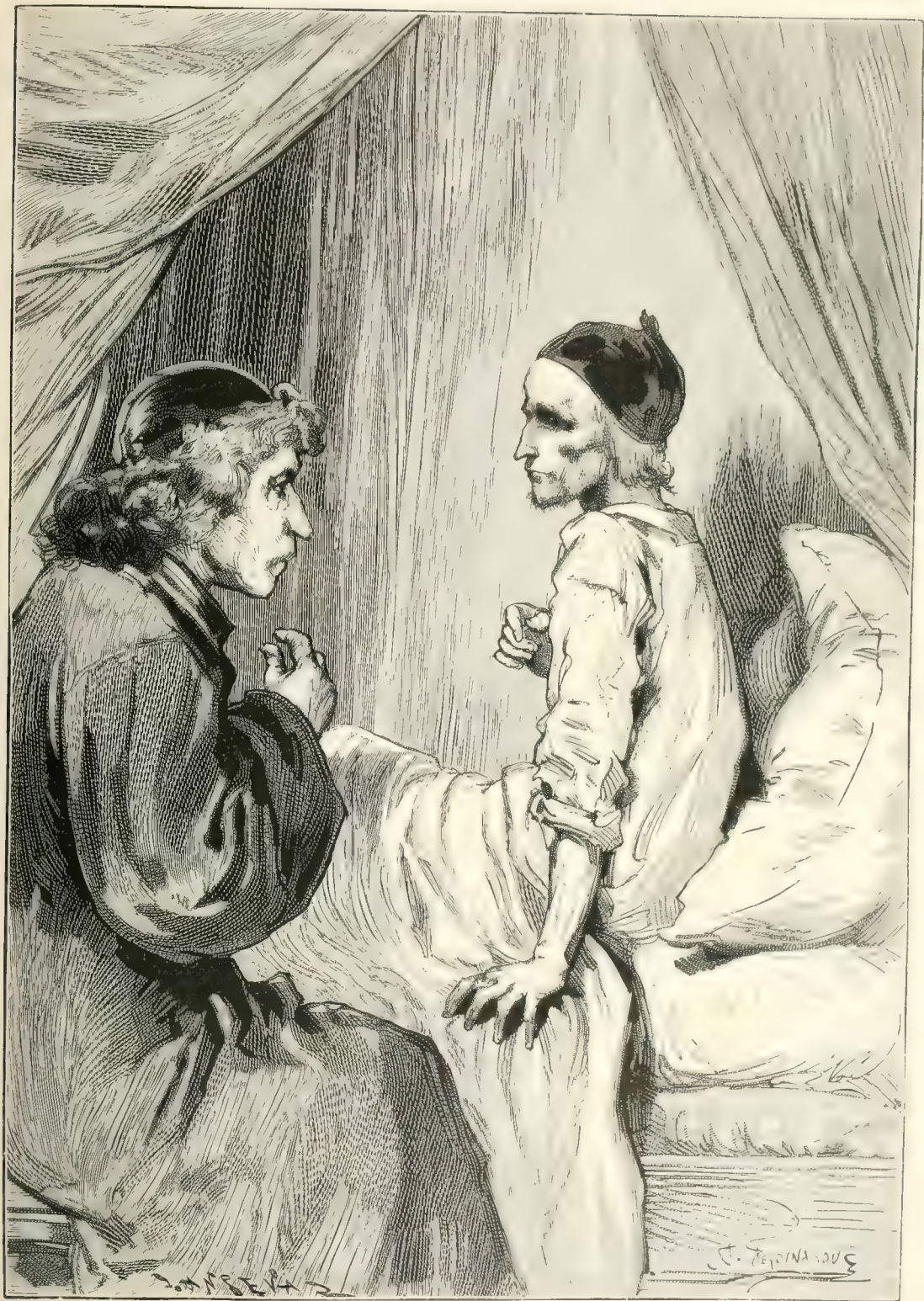
"Cardinal Malipieri—your craft is no match—for my agony," answered Rodin in a failing voice. "The proof—that I have not told my secret—if I have a secret—is—that you want to make me tell it!"

In spite of his pain and weakness, the Jesuit had courage to raise himself in the bed and look the cardinal full in the face, with a smile of bitter irony; after which he fell back on the pillow and pressed his hands to his chest, with a long sigh of anguish.

"Damnation! the infernal Jesuit has found me out!" said the cardinal to himself, as he stamped his foot with rage. "He sees that he was compromised by his first movement; he is now upon his guard; I shall get nothing more from him—unless, indeed, profiting by the state of weakness in which he is, I can, by entreaties, by threats, by terror——"

The prelate was unable to finish. The door opened abruptly, and Father d'Aigrigny entered the room, exclaiming with an explosion of joy:

"Excellent news!"



"YOUR CRAFT IS NO MATCH—FOR MY AGONY."

CHAPTER XV

GOOD NEWS

BY the alteration in the countenance of Father d'Aigrigny, his pale cheek, and the feebleness of his walk, one might see that the terrible scene in the square of Nôtre-Dame had violently reacted upon his health. Yet his face was radiant and triumphant as he entered Rodin's chamber, exclaiming :

"Excellent news!"

On these words Rodin started. In spite of his weakness he raised his head, and his eyes shone with a curious, uneasy, piercing expression. With his lean hand he beckoned Father d'Aigrigny to approach the bed, and said to him in a broken voice, so weak that it was scarcely audible :

"I am very ill—the cardinal has nearly finished me—but if this excellent news—relates to the Rennepont affair—of which I hear nothing—it might save me yet!"

"Be saved then!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, forgetting the recommendations of Dr. Baleinier; "read, rejoice! What you foretold is beginning to be realized!"

So saying, he drew a paper from his pocket and delivered it to Rodin, who seized it with an eager and trembling hand. Some minutes before, Rodin would have been really incapable of continuing his conversation with the cardinal, even if prudence had allowed him to do so; nor could he have read a single line, so dim had his sight become. But, at the words of Father d'Aigrigny, he felt such a renewal of hope and vigor that, by a mighty effort of energy and will, he rose to a sitting posture, and, with clear head and look of intelligent animation, he read rapidly the paper that Father d'Aigrigny had just delivered to him.

The cardinal, amazed at this sudden transfiguration, asked himself if he beheld the same man who a few minutes before had fallen back on his bed almost insensible.

Hardly had Rodin finished reading than he uttered a cry of stifled joy, saying, with an accent impossible to describe :

"ONE gone ! it works — 'tis well !"

And, closing his eyes in a kind of ecstatic transport, a smile of proud triumph overspread his face, and rendered him still more hideous by discovering his yellow and gumless teeth. His emotion was so violent that the paper fell from his trembling hand.

"He has fainted," cried Father d'Aigrigny with uneasiness, as he leaned over Rodin. "It is my fault ; I forgot that the doctor cautioned me not to talk to him of serious matters."

"No ; do not reproach yourself," said Rodin in a low voice, half-raising himself in the bed. "This unexpected joy may perhaps cure me. Yes—I scarce know what I feel—but look at my cheeks—it seems to me that, for the first time since I have been stretched on this bed of pain, they are a little warm."

Rodin spoke the truth. A slight color appeared suddenly on his livid and icy cheeks ; his voice, though still very weak, became less tremulous, and he exclaimed in a tone of conviction that startled Father d'Aigrigny and the prelate :

"This first success answers for the others. I read the future. Yes, yes ; our cause will triumph. Every member of the execrable Rennepont family will be crushed—and that soon—you will see ——"

Then, pausing, Rodin threw himself back on the pillow, exclaiming :

"Oh ! I am choked with joy. My voice fails me."

"But what is it ?" asked the cardinal of Father d'Aigrigny.

The latter replied, in a tone of hypocritical sanctity :

"One of the heirs of the Rennepont family, a poor fellow, worn out with excesses and debauchery, died three days ago, at the close of some abominable orgies, in which he had braved the cholera with sacrilegious impiety. In consequence of the indisposition that kept me at home, and of another circumstance, I only received to-day the certificate of the death of this victim of intemperance and irreligion. I must proclaim it to the praise of his reverence"—pointing to Rodin—"that he told me the worst enemies of the descendants of that infamous renegade would be their own bad passions, and that we might look to them as our allies against the whole impious race. And so it has happened with Jacques Rennepont."

"You see," said Rodin, in so faint a voice that it was almost unintelligible, "the punishment begins already. One of the Renneponts is dead—and believe me—this certificate," and he pointed to the paper that Father d'Aigrigny held in his hand, "will one day be worth forty millions to the Society of Jesus—and that—because ——"

The lips alone finished the sentence. During some seconds, Rodin's voice had become so faint that it was at last quite imperceptible. His larynx, contracted by violent emotion, no longer emitted any sound. The Jesuit, far from being disconcerted by this incident, finished his phrase, as it were, by expressive pantomime. Raising his head proudly, he tapped his forehead with his forefinger, as if to express that it was to his ability this first success was owing.

But he soon fell back again on the bed exhausted, breathless, sinking, with his cotton handkerchief pressed once more to his parched lips. The good news, as Father d'Aigrigny called it, had not cured Rodin. For a moment only he had had the courage to forget his pain. But the slight color on his cheek soon disappeared; his face became once more livid. His sufferings, suspended for a moment, were so much increased in violence that he writhed beneath the coverlet and buried his face in the pillow, extending his arms above his head and holding them stiff as bars of iron. After this crisis, intense as it was rapid, during which Father d'Aigrigny and the prelate bent anxiously over him, Rodin, whose face was bathed in cold sweat, made a sign that he suffered less, and that he wished to drink of a potion to which he pointed. Father d'Aigrigny fetched it for him, and while the cardinal held him up with marked disgust, the abbé administered a few spoonfuls of the potion, which almost immediately produced a soothing effect.

"Shall I call M. Rousselet?" said Father d'Aigrigny, when Rodin was once more laid down in bed.

Rodin shook his head; then, with a fresh effort, he raised his right hand, opened it, and pointed with his forefinger to a desk in a corner of the room, to signify that, being no longer able to speak, he wished to write.

"I understand your reverence," said Father d'Aigrigny; "but first calm yourself. Presently, if you require it, I will give you writing materials."

Two knocks at the outer door of the next room interrupted this scene. From motives of prudence, Father d'Aigrigny had begged Rousselet to remain in the first of the three rooms. He now went to open the door, and Rousselet handed him a voluminous packet, saying:

"I beg pardon for disturbing you, father, but I was told to let you have these papers instantly."

"Thank you, M. Rousselet," said Father d'Aigrigny; "do you know at what hour Dr. Balemier will return?"

"He will not be long, father, for he wishes to perform before night the painful operation that will have a decisive effect on the condition of Father Rodin. I am preparing what is necessary for it," added

Rousselet, as he pointed to a singular and formidable apparatus, which Father d'Aigrigny examined with a kind of terror.

"I do not know if the symptom is a serious one," said the Jesuit; "but the reverend father has suddenly lost his voice."

"It is the third time this has happened within the last week," said Rousselet; "the operation of Dr. Baleinier will act both on the larynx and on the lungs."

"Is the operation a very painful one?" asked Father d'Aigrigny.

"There is, perhaps, none more cruel in surgery," answered the young doctor; "and Dr. Baleinier has partly concealed its nature from Father Rodin."

"Please to wait here for Dr. Baleinier, and send him to us as soon as he arrives," resumed Father d'Aigrigny; and, returning to the sick chamber, he sat down by the bedside and said to Rodin, as he showed him the letter:

"Here are different reports with regard to different members of the Rennepont family, whom I have had looked after by others, my indisposition having kept me at home for the last few days. I do not know, father, if the state of your health will permit you to hear——"

Rodin made a gesture, at once so supplicating and peremptory, that Father d'Aigrigny felt there would be at least as much danger in refusing as in granting his request; so, turning toward the cardinal, still inconsolable at not having discovered the Jesuit's secret, he said to him with respectful deference, pointing at the same time to the letter:

"Have I the permission of your eminence?"

The prelate bowed and replied:

"Your affairs are ours, my dear father. The Church must always rejoice in what rejoices your glorious Company."

Father d'Aigrigny unsealed the packet, and found in it different notes in different handwritings. When he had read the first his countenance darkened, and he said, in a grave tone:

"A misfortune—a great misfortune."

Rodin turned his head abruptly, and looked at him with an air of uneasy questioning.

"Florine is dead of the cholera," answered Father d'Aigrigny; "and what is the worst," added he, crumpling the note between his hands, "before dying, the miserable creature confessed to Mademoiselle de Cardoville that she long acted as a spy under the orders of your reverence."

No doubt the death of Florine, and the confession she had made, crossed some of the plans of Rodin, for he uttered an inarticulate murmur, and his countenance expressed great vexation.

Passing to another note, Father d'Aigrigny continued:

"This relates to Marshal Simon, and is not absolutely bad, but still far from satisfactory, as it announces some amelioration in his position. We shall see if it merits belief, by information from another source."

Rodin made a sign of impatience, to hasten Father d'Aigrigny to read the note, which he did as follows:

"For some days the mind of the marshal has appeared to be less sorrowful, anxious, and agitated. He lately passed two hours with his daughters, which had not been the case for some time before. The harsh countenance of the soldier Dagobert is becoming smoother — a sure sign of some amelioration in the condition of the marshal. Detected by their handwriting, the last anonymous letters were returned by Dagobert to the postman, without having been opened by the marshal. Some other method must be found to get them delivered."

Looking at Rodin, Father d'Aigrigny said to him:

"Your reverence thinks, with me, that this note is not very satisfactory?"

Rodin held down his head. One saw by the expression of his countenance how much he suffered by not being able to speak. Twice he put his hand to his throat and looked at Father d'Aigrigny with anguish.

"Oh!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, angrily, when he had perused another note; "for one lucky chance, to-day brings some very black ones."

At these words, turning hastily to Father d'Aigrigny, and extending his trembling hands, Rodin questioned him with look and gesture. The cardinal, sharing his uneasiness, exclaimed:

"What do you learn by this note, my dear father?"

"We thought the residence of M. Hardy in our house completely unknown," replied Father d'Aigrigny, "but we now fear that Agricola Baudoin has discovered the retreat of his old master, and that he has even communicated with him by letter, through a servant of the house. So," added the reverend father, angrily, "during the three days that I have not been able to visit the pavilion, one of my servants must have been bought over. There is one of them, a man blind of one eye, whom I have always suspected — the wretch! But no; I will not yet believe this treachery. The consequences would be too deplorable; for I know how matters stand, and that such a correspondence might ruin everything. By awaking in M. Hardy memories with difficulty laid asleep, they might destroy in a single day all that has been done since he inhabits our house. Luckily, this note contains only doubts and fears; my other information will be more positive, and will not, I hope, confirm them."

"My dear father," said the cardinal, "do not despair. The Lord will not abandon the good cause!"

Father d'Aigrigny seemed very little consoled by this assurance. He remained still and thoughtful, while Rodin writhed his head in a paroxysm of mute rage as he reflected on this new check.

"Let us turn to the last note," said Father d'Aigrigny, after a moment of thoughtful silence. "I have so much confidence in the person who sends it, that I cannot doubt the correctness of the information it contains. May it contradict the others!"

In order not to break the chain of facts contained in this last note, which was to have so startling an effect on the actors in this scene, we shall leave it to the reader's imagination to supply the exclamations of surprise, hate, rage, and fear of Father d'Aigrigny, and the terrific pantomime of Rodin, during the perusal of this formidable document, the result of the observations of a faithful and secret agent of the reverend fathers.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SECRET NOTE

THIS was what Father d'Aigrigny read :

“Three days ago, the Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, who had never before visited Mademoiselle de Cardoville, arrived at that lady's house at half-past one in the afternoon and remained till nearly five o'clock. Soon after the abbé's departure two servants came out ; one went to Marshal Simon's, the other to Agricola Baudoin, the forgerman, and then to Prince Djalma. . . .

“Yesterday, about noon, Marshal Simon and his two daughters came to Mademoiselle de Cardoville's, and soon after the Abbé Gabriel and Agricola Baudoin joined them. A long conference took place between them and Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and they remained there till half-past three.

“Marshal Simon, who came in a carriage, went away on foot with his two daughters ; all three seemed pleased, and in one of the quieter alleys of the Champs Elysées the marshal was seen to embrace his children affectionately.

“Gabriel de Rennepont and Agricola Baudoin were the last to leave. Gabriel returned home, as was learned afterward ; the blacksmith, who was carefully shadowed, went to the wine-shop in the Rue de la Harpe. The spies followed him. He called for a bottle of wine, and took a seat in a retired corner of the box at the end of the left-hand side ; he did not drink, and seemed preoccupied ; it was thought he was waiting for some one. In about half an hour a man of about thirty came ; he was dark, tall, blind in the left eye, dressed in a maroon coat and black trousers ; his head was bare. He must have come from the neighborhood. He sat down at the blacksmith's table, and they held an animated conversation, which, unfortunately, could not be overheard. At the end of half an hour Agricola Baudoin placed into the one-eyed man's hand a little packet, which, judging from its size and the receiver's air of gratitude, must have contained money. He then received from Baudoin, with urgent instructions, apparently a letter, which he put into his pocket. The two separated, and the blacksmith said, ‘To-morrow.’

“After this interview it was deemed necessary to follow the one-eyed man ; he left the Rue de la Harpe, crossed the Luxembourg, and entered the House of Retreat in the Rue Vaugirard.

“Next day our men were early in the Rue de la Harpe, for we did not know the hour appointed for the one-eyed man to come ; they waited till half-past one, when the blacksmith arrived.

“Our man, after thoroughly disguising himself, entered the wine-shop and took a seat as near the blacksmith as he could without offense ; the one-eyed man soon came, and handed Baudoin a letter. At the sight of it he was so affected that before he had even read it a tear was seen to fall on his mustaches.

"The letter was very short, for it took less than ten minutes to read it. Baudoin, however, seemed so delighted that he bounded from his seat with joy and shook the man's hand warmly; but he seemed to ask something urgently which the other refused. Finally he seemed to yield, and they both left.

"They were followed. As yesterday, the one-eyed man entered the house in the Rue de la Vaugirard; Agricola, after accompanying him to the door, prowled about, seemingly studying the locality. He wrote occasionally in a note-book. The blacksmith then went hastily to the Place de l'Odéon, where he took a cab. Our man took another, and followed him to Mademoiselle de Cardoville's, Rue d'Anjou.

"Luckily, just as Agricola was entering the hotel a carriage with Mademoiselle de Cardoville's livery was coming out. That lady's equerry was in it with a man of forbidding aspect, miserably dressed, and very pale. This extraordinary incident deserved attention; the carriage was followed; it went directly to the Prefecture of Police. The two men descended and entered the office of the Detective Service; in half an hour Mademoiselle de Cardoville's servant came out alone, and, entering the carriage, was driven to the Palais de Justice, where he entered the office of the Public Prosecutor; he remained half an hour, and then returned to the Rue d'Anjou, Hotel de Cardoville.

"It was learned, by a mere chance, that on the same day, about eight in the evening, MM. d'Ormesson and de Valbelle, distinguished advocates, and the magistrate who had heard Mademoiselle de Cardoville's complaint of her detention by Dr. Baleinier, had a conference with her that lasted till near midnight, at which Agricola Baudoin and two other workmen of M. Hardy's were present.

"To-day, Prince Djalma visited Marshal Simon. He remained three hours and a half. At the end of that time they went, to all appearance, to Mademoiselle de Cardoville's, for their carriage stopped at the Rue d'Anjou. An unforeseen accident prevented the ascertainment of this circumstance.

"It is learned that a summons has been issued to a certain Leonard, a late factotum of Baron Tripeaud. Leonard is suspected of being the author of the fire at M. Hardy's factory, Baudoin and two of his mates having described a man with a striking resemblance to Leonard.

"From all this it results that, for some days, the Hotel de Cardoville is the source of the active proceedings which seem to center in Marshal Simon, his daughters, and M. Hardy, in which Mademoiselle de Cardoville, the abbé, Gabriel, and Agricola Baudoin are the most indefatigable and dangerous agents."

By comparing this note with other information, there resulted distressing discoveries for the reverend fathers. Gabriel had had frequent and long interviews with Mademoiselle de Cardoville, whom he had hitherto not known.

Agricola Baudoin was in communication with M. Hardy, and justice was on the track of the authors of the riot which had destroyed the factory of Baron Tripeaud's rival.

It seemed certain that Mademoiselle de Cardoville had had an interview with Djalma.

This combination of facts showed that, faithful to the threats she had uttered to Rodin when she had unmasked the double perfidy of the reverend father, Mademoiselle de Cardoville was actively engaged in uniting the scattered members of her family to form a league against

those dangerous enemies, whose detestable projects, once unveiled and boldly encountered, could hardly have a chance of success.

The reader will now understand the tremendous effect of this note



on Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin—on Rodin, stretched powerless on a bed of pain at the moment when the scaffolding, raised with so much labor, seemed to be tumbling around him.

CHAPTER XVII

THE OPERATION

WE have given up the attempt to paint the countenance, attitude, and gesticulation of Rodin during the reading of this note, which seemed to ruin all his most cherished hopes. Everything was failing at once, at the moment when only superhuman trust in the success of his plans could give him sufficient energy to strive against mortal sickness. A single, absorbing thought had agitated him even to delirium: What progress, during his illness, had been made in this immense affair? He had first heard a good piece of news, the death of Jacques Rennepont; but now the advantages of this decease, which reduced the number of the heirs from seven to six, were entirely lost. To what purpose would be this death if the other members of the family, dispersed and persecuted with such infernal perseverance, were to unite and discover the enemies who had so long aimed at them in darkness? If all those wounded hearts were to console, enlighten, support each other, their cause would be gained, and the inheritance rescued from the reverend fathers. What was to be done?

Strange power of the human will! Rodin had one foot in the grave; he was almost at the last gasp; his voice had failed him. And yet that obstinate nature, so full of energy and resources, did not despair. Let but a miracle restore his health, and that firm confidence in the success of his projects, which has given him power to struggle against disease, tells him that he could yet save all—but then he must have health and life!

Health! life! His physician does not know if he will survive the shock—if he can bear the pain—of a terrible operation. Health! life! and just now Rodin heard talk of the solemn funeral they had prepared for him.

And yet—health, life, he will have them. Yes; he has willed to live—and he has lived—why should he not live longer?

He will live—because he has willed it!

All that we have just written passed through Rodin's mind in a second.

His features, convulsed by the mental torment he endured, must have assumed a very strange expression, for Father d'Aigrigny and the cardinal looked at him in silent consternation.

Once resolved to live, and to sustain a desperate struggle with the Rennepont family, Rodin acted in consequence. For a few moments Father d'Aigrigny and the prelate believed themselves under the influence of a dream. By an effort of unparalleled energy, and as if moved by hidden mechanism, Rodin sprang from the bed, dragging the sheet with him, and trailing it, like a shroud, behind his livid and fleshless body. The room was cold; the face of the Jesuit was bathed in sweat; his naked and bony feet left their moist print upon the stones.

"What are you doing? It is death!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, rushing toward Rodin, to force him to lie down again.

But the latter, extending one of his skeleton arms, as hard as iron, pushed aside Father d'Aigrigny with inconceivable vigor, considering the state of exhaustion in which he had so long been.

"He has the strength of a man in a fit of epilepsy," said Father d'Aigrigny, recovering his balance.

With a steady step Rodin advanced to the desk on which Dr. Baleinier daily wrote his prescriptions. Seating himself before it, the Jesuit took pen and paper, and began to write in a firm hand. His calm, slow, and sure movements had in them something of the deliberateness remarked in somnambulists.

Mute and motionless, hardly knowing whether they dreamed or not, the cardinal and Father d'Aigrigny remained staring at the incredible coolness of Rodin, who, half-naked, continued to write with perfect tranquility.

"But, father," said the Abbé d'Aigrigny, advancing toward him, "this is madness!"

Rodin shrugged his shoulders, stopped him with a gesture, and made him a sign to read what he had just written.

The reverend father expected to see the ravings of a diseased brain; but he took the note, while Rodin commenced another.

"My lord," exclaimed Father d'Aigrigny, "read this!"

The cardinal read the paper, and returning it to the reverend father with equal amazement, added:

"It is full of reason, ability, and resources. We shall thus be able to neutralize the dangerous combination of Abbé Gabriel and Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who appear to be the most formidable leaders of the coalition."

"It is really miraculous," said Father d'Aigrigny.

"Oh, my dear father!" whispered the cardinal, shaking his head; "what a pity that we are the only witnesses of this scene! What an excellent MIRACLE we could have made of it! In one sense, it is another Raising of Lazarus!"

"What an idea, my lord!" answered Father d'Aigrigny, in a low voice. "It is perfect — and we must not give it up —"

This innocent little plot was interrupted by Rodin, who, turning his head, made a sign to Father d'Aigrigny to approach, and delivered to him another sheet, with this note attached:

"To be executed within an hour."

Having rapidly perused the paper, Father d'Aigrigny exclaimed:

"Right! I had not thought of that. Instead of being fatal, the correspondence between Agricola and M. Hardy may thus have the best results. Really," added the reverend father in a low voice to the prelate, while Rodin continued to write, "I am quite confounded. I read — I see — and yet I can hardly believe my eyes. Just before, exhausted and dying — and now with his mind as clear and penetrating as ever. Can this be one of the phenomena of somnambulism, in which the mind alone governs and sustains the body?"

Suddenly the door opened, and Dr. Baleinier entered the room.

At sight of Rodin, seated half-naked at the desk, with his feet upon the cold stones, the doctor exclaimed, in a tone of reproach and alarm:

"But, my lord — but, father — it is murder to let the unhappy man do this! — If he is delirious from fever, he must have the strait-waistcoat, and be tied down in bed."

So saying, Dr. Baleinier hastily approached Rodin, and took him by the arm. Instead of finding the skin dry and chilly, as he expected, he found it flexible, almost damp. Struck with surprise, the doctor sought to feel the pulse of the left hand, which Rodin resigned to him, while he continued working with the right.

"What a prodigy!" cried the doctor, as he counted Rodin's pulse; "for a week past, and even this morning, the pulse has been abrupt, intermittent, almost insensible, and now it is firm, regular — I am really puzzled — what then has happened? I can hardly believe what I see," added the doctor, turning toward Father d'Aigrigny and the cardinal.

"The reverend father, who had first lost his voice, was next seized with such furious and violent despair, caused by the receipt of bad news," answered Father d'Aigrigny, "that we feared a moment for his life; while now, on the contrary, the reverend father has gained sufficient strength to go to his desk and write for some minutes, with a

clearness of argument and expression which has confounded both the cardinal and myself."

"There is no longer any doubt of it," cried the doctor. "The violent despair has caused a degree of emotion which will admirably prepare the reactive crisis that I am now almost certain of producing by the operation."

"You persist in the operation?" whispered Father d'Aigrigny, while Rodin continued to write.

"I might have hesitated this morning; but, disposed as he now is for it, I must profit by the moment of excitement, which will be followed by greater depression."

"Then, without the operation——" said the cardinal.

"This fortunate and unexpected crisis will soon be over, and the reaction may kill him, my lord."

"Have you informed him of the serious nature of the operation?"

"Pretty nearly, my lord."

"But it is time to bring him to the point."

"That is what I will do, my lord," said Dr. Baleinier; and approaching Rodin, who continued to write, he thus addressed him in a firm voice: "My reverend father, do you wish to be up and well in a week?"

Rodin nodded, full of confidence, as much as to say:

"I am up already."

"Do not deceive yourself," replied the doctor. "This crisis is excellent, but it will not last, and if we would profit by it, we must proceed with the operation of which I have spoken to you—or, I tell you plainly, I answer for nothing after such a shock."

Rodin was the more struck with these words, as, half an hour ago, he had experienced the short duration of the improvement occasioned by Father d'Aigrigny's good news, and as already he felt increased oppression on the chest.

Dr. Baleinier, wishing to decide him, added:

"In a word, father, will you live or die?"

Rodin wrote rapidly this answer, which he gave to the doctor:

"To live, I would let you cut me limb from limb. I am ready for anything."

And he made a movement to rise.

"I must tell you, reverend father, so as not to take you by surprise," added Dr. Baleinier, "that this operation is cruelly painful."

Rodin shrugged his shoulders, and wrote with a firm hand:

"Leave me my head; you may take all the rest."

The doctor read these words aloud, and the cardinal and Father d'Aigrigny looked at each other in admiration of this dauntless courage.

"Reverend father," said Dr. Baleinier, "you must lie down."

Rodin wrote:

"Get everything ready. I have still some orders to write. Let me know when it is time"

Then, folding up a paper which he had sealed with a wafer, Rodin gave these words to Father d'Aigrigny:

"Send this note instantly to the agent who addressed the anonymous letters to Marshal Simon.

"Instantly, reverend father," replied the abbé; "I will employ a sure messenger."

"Reverend father," said Baleinier to Rodin, "since you *must* write, lie down in bed and write there during our little preparations."

Rodin made an affirmative gesture and rose. But already the prognostics of the doctor were realized. The Jesuit could hardly remain standing for a second; he fell back into a chair and looked at Dr. Baleinier with anguish, while his breathing became more and more difficult.

The doctor said to him:

"Do not be uneasy. But we must make haste. Lean upon me and Father d'Aigrigny."

Aided by these two supporters, Rodin was able to regain the bed. Once there, he made signs that they should bring him pen, ink, and paper. Then he continued to write upon his knees, pausing from time to time to breathe with great difficulty.

"Reverend father," said Baleinier to D'Aigrigny, "are you capable of acting as one of my assistants in the operation? Have you that sort of courage?"

"No," said the reverend father; "in the army I could never assist at an amputation. The sight of blood is too much for me."

"There will be no blood," said the doctor, "but it will be worse. Please send me three of our reverend fathers to assist me, and ask M. Rousselet to bring in the apparatus."

Father d'Aigrigny went out. The prelate approached the doctor and whispered, pointing to Rodin:

"Is he out of danger?"

"If he stands the operation—yes, my lord."

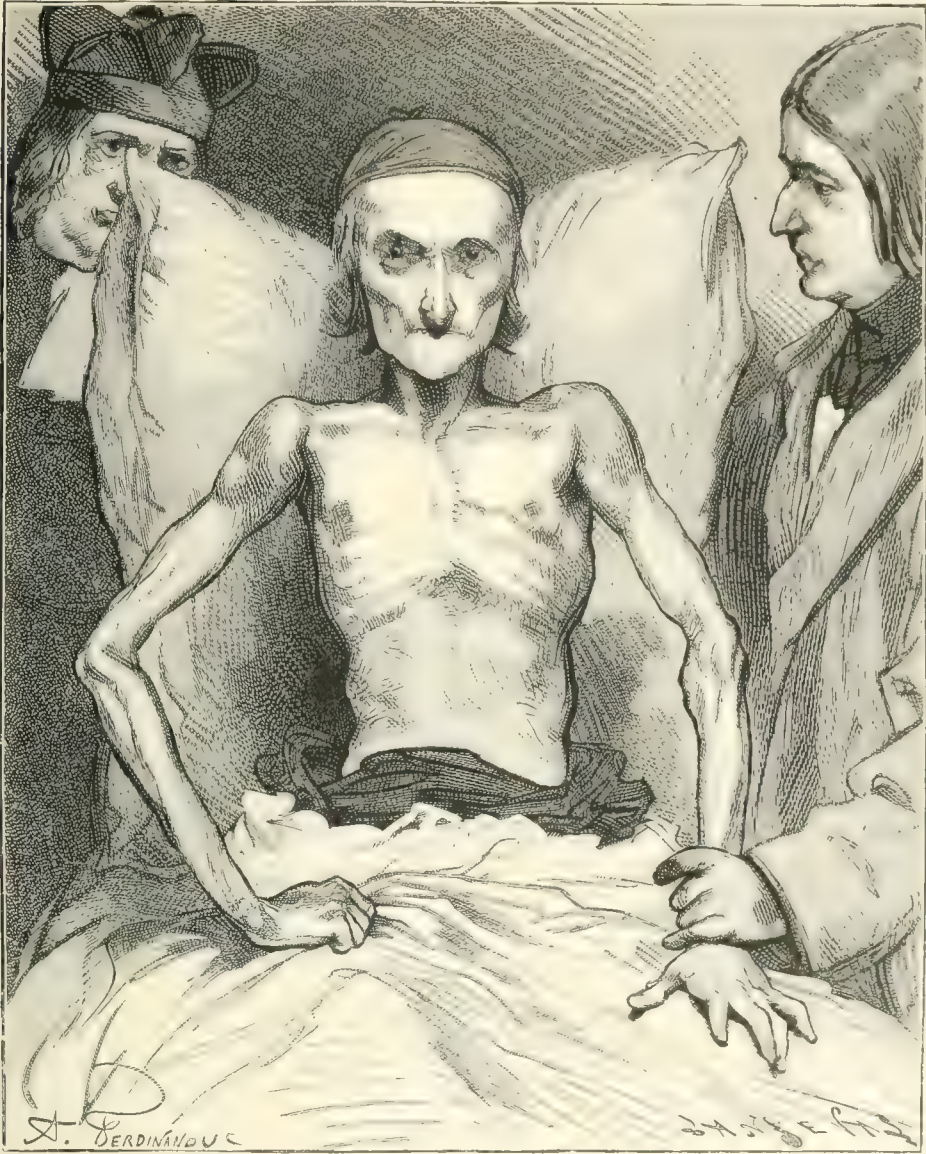
"Are you sure that he will stand it?"

"To him I should say, 'yes'; to you, 'I hope so.'"

"And were he to die, would there be time to administer the sacraments in public, with a certain pomp, which always causes some little delay?"

"His dying may continue, my lord—a quarter of an hour."

"It is short, but we must be satisfied with that," said the prelate.
And, going to one of the windows, he began to tap with his fingers



on the glass, while he thought of the illumination effects in the event of Rodin's lying-in-state.

At this moment Rousselet entered with a large square box under his arm. He placed it on the drawers and began to arrange his apparatus.

"How many have you prepared?" said the doctor.

"Six, sir."

"Four will do, but it is well to be fully provided. The cotton is not too thick?"

"Look, sir."

"Very good."

"And how is the reverend father?" asked the pupil.

"Humph!" answered the doctor, in a whisper. "The chest is terribly clogged, the respiration hissing, the voice gone — still there is a change."

"All my fear is, sir, that the reverend father will not be able to stand the dreadful pain."

"It is another chance; but, under the circumstances, we must risk all. Come, my dear boy, light the taper; I hear our assistants."

Just then Father d'Aigrigny entered the room, accompanied by the three Jesuits who, in the morning, had walked in the garden.

The two old men, with their rosy cheeks, and the young one, with ascetic countenance, all three dressed in black, with their square caps and white bands, appeared perfectly ready to assist Dr. Balemier in his formidable operation.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE TORTURE

“**R**EVEREND fathers,” said Dr. Baleinier, graciously to the three, “I thank you for your kind aid. What you have to do is very simple, and, by the blessing of heaven, this operation will save the life of our dear Father Rodin.”

The three black-gowns cast up their eyes piously, and then bowed altogether, like one man. Rodin, indifferent to what was passing around him, never ceased an instant to write or reflect. Nevertheless, in spite of his apparent calmness, he felt such difficulty in breathing, that more than once Dr. Baleinier had turned round uneasily, as he heard the stifled rattling in the throat of the sick man. Making a sign to his pupil, the doctor approached Rodin, and said to him:

“Come, reverend father; this is the important moment. Courage!”

No sign of alarm was expressed in the Jesuit’s countenance. His features remained impassible as those of a corpse. Only, his little reptile eyes sparkled still more brightly in their dark cavities. For a moment, he looked round at the spectators of this scene; then, taking his pen between his teeth, he folded and wafered another letter, placed it on the table beside the bed, and nodded to Dr. Baleinier, as if to say, “I am ready.”

“You must take off your flannel waistcoat, and your shirt, father.” Rodin hesitated an instant, and the doctor resumed:

“It is absolutely necessary, father.”

Aided by Baleinier, Rodin obeyed, while the doctor added, no doubt to spare his modesty:

“We shall only require the chest, right and left, my dear father.”

And now Rodin, stretched upon his back, with his dirty night-cap still on his head, exposed the upper part of a livid trunk, or rather, the bony cage of a skeleton, for the shadows of the ribs and cartilages encircled the skin with deep, black lines. As for the arms, they resembled bones twisted with cord, and covered with tanned parchment.

"Come, M. Rousselet, the apparatus!" said Baleinier.

Then addressing the three Jesuits, he added:

"Please draw near, gentlemen; what you have to do is very simple, as you will see."

It was indeed very simple. The doctor gave to each of his four assistants a sort of little steel tripod about two inches in diameter and three in height; the circular center of this tripod was filled with cotton; the instrument was held in the left hand by means of a wooden handle. In the right hand, each assistant held a small tin tube about eighteen inches long; at one end was a mouth-piece to receive the lips of the operator, and the other spread out so as to form a cover to the little tripod. These preparations had nothing alarming in them. Father d'Aigrigny and the prelate, who looked on from a little distance, could not understand how this operation should be so painful. They soon understood it.

Dr. Baleinier, having thus provided his four assistants, made them approach Rodin, whose bed had been rolled into the middle of the room. Two of them were placed on one side, two on the other.

"Now, gentlemen," said Dr. Baleinier, "set light to the cotton; place the lighted part on the skin of his reverence, by means of the tripod which contains the wick; cover the tripod with the broad part of the tube, and then blow through the other end to keep up the fire. It is very simple, as you see."

It was, in fact, full of the most patriarchal and primitive ingenuity. Four lighted cotton wicks, so disposed as to burn very slowly, were applied to the two sides of Rodin's chest. This is vulgarly called the *mora*. The trick is done when the whole thickness of the skin has been burned slowly through. It lasts seven or eight minutes. They say that an amputation is nothing to it.

Rodin had watched the preparations with intrepid curiosity. But, at the first touch of the four fires, he writhed like a serpent, without being able to utter a cry. Even the expression of pain was denied him.

The four assistants being disturbed by the sudden start of Rodin, it was necessary to begin again.

"Courage, my dear father! offer these sufferings to the Lord!" said Dr. Baleinier in a sanctified tone. "I told you the operation would be very painful; but then it is salutary in proportion. Come; you that have shown such decisive resolution, do not fail at the last moment!"

Rodin had closed his eyes, conquered by the first agony of pain. He now opened them, and looked at the doctor as if ashamed of such weakness. And yet on the sides of his chest were four large, bleeding wounds—so violent had been the first sin.

As he again extended himself on the bed of torture, Rodin made a sign that he wished to write. The doctor gave him the pen, and he wrote as follows, by way of memorandum:

"It is better not to lose any time. Inform Baron Tripeaud of the warrant issued against Leonard, so that he may be on his guard."

Having written this note, the Jesuit gave it to Dr. Baleinier, to hand it to Father d'Aigrigny, who was as much amazed as the doctor and the cardinal at such extraordinary presence of mind in the midst of such horrible pain. Rodin, with his eyes fixed on the reverend father, seemed to wait with impatience for him to leave the room to execute his orders.

Guessing the thought of Rodin, the doctor whispered Father d'Aigrigny, who went out.

"Come, reverend father," said the doctor, "we must begin again. This time, do not move."

Rodin did not answer, but clasped his hands over his head, closed his eyes, and presented his chest.

It was a strange, lugubrious, almost fantastic spectacle. The three priests, in their long black gowns, leaned over this body, which almost resembled a corpse, and blowing through their tubes into the chest of the patient, seemed as if pumping up his blood by some magic charm. A sickening odor of burned flesh began to spread through the silent chamber, and each assistant heard a slight crackling beneath the smoking trivet; it was the skin of Rodin giving way to the action of fire, and splitting open in four different parts of his chest. The sweat poured from his livid face, which it made to shine; a few locks of his gray hair stood up stiff and moist from his temples. Sometimes the spasms were so violent that the veins swelled on his stiffened arms, and were stretched like cords ready to break.

Enduring this frightful torture with as much intrepid resignation as the savage whose glory consists in despising pain, Rodin gathered his strength and courage from the hope—we had almost said the certainty—of life. Such was the make of this dauntless character, such the energy of this powerful mind, that in the midst of indescribable torments his one fixed idea never left him. During the rare intervals of suffering—for pain is equal even at this degree of intensity—Rodin still thought of the Remepont inheritance, and calculated his chances, and combined his measures, feeling that he had not a minute to lose.

Dr. Baleinier watched him with extreme attention, waiting for the effects of the reaction of pain upon the patient, who seemed already to breathe with less difficulty.

Suddenly Rodin placed his hand on his forehead, as if struck with

some new idea, and turning his head toward Dr. Baleinier, made a sign to him to suspend the operation.

"I must tell you, reverend father," answered the doctor, "that it is not half finished, and, if we leave off, the renewal will be more painful ——"

Rodin made a sign that he did not care, and that he wanted to write.

"Gentlemen, stop a moment," said Dr. Baleinier; "keep down your moxas, but do not blow the fire."

So the fire was to burn slowly, instead of fiercely, but still upon the skin of the patient. In spite of this pain, less intense, but still sharp and keen, Rodin, stretched upon his back, began to write, holding the paper above his head. On the first sheet he traced some alphabetic signs, part of a cipher known to himself alone. In the midst of the torture, a luminous idea had crossed his mind; fearful of forgetting it amid his sufferings, he now took note of it. On another paper he wrote the following, which was instantly delivered to Father d'Aigrigny:

"Send B. immediately to Faringhea, for the report of the last few days with regard to Djalma, and let B. bring it hither on the instant."

Father d'Aigrigny went out to execute this new order. The cardinal approached a little nearer to the scene of the operation, for, in spite of the bad odor of the room, he took delight in seeing the Jesuit half roasted, having long cherished against him the rancor of an Italian and a priest.

"Come, reverend father," said the doctor to Rodin, "continue to be admirably courageous, and your chest will free itself. You have still a bitter moment to go through — and then I have good hope."

The patient resumed his former position. The moment Father d'Aigrigny returned, Rodin questioned him with a look, to which the reverend father replied by a nod.

At a sign from the doctor, the four assistants began to blow through the tubes with all their might. This increase of torture was so horrible that, in spite of his self-control, Rodin gnashed his teeth, started convulsively, and so expanded his palpitating chest that, after a violent spasm, there rose from his throat and lungs a scream of terrific pain — but it was free, loud, sonorous.

"The chest is free!" cried the doctor, in triumph. "The lungs have play — the voice returns — he is saved! — Blow, gentlemen, blow; and, reverend father, cry out as much as you please; I shall be delighted to hear you, for it will give you relief. Courage! I answer for the result. It is a wonderful cure. I will publish it by sound of trumpet."

"Allow me, doctor," whispered Father d'Aigrigny, as he approached

Dr. Baleinier; "the cardinal can witness that I claimed beforehand the publication of this affair — as a miraculous fact."

"Let it be miraculous then," answered Dr. Baleinier, disappointed — for he set some value on his own work.

On hearing he was saved, Rodin, though his sufferings were perhaps worse than ever, for the fire had now pierced the scarfskin, assumed almost an infernal beauty. Through the painful contraction of his features shone the pride of savage triumph; the monster felt that he was becoming once more strong and powerful, and he seemed conscious of the evils that his fatal resurrection was to cause. And so, still writhing beneath the flames, he pronounced these words, the first that struggled from his chest:

"I told you I should live!"

"You told us true," cried the doctor, feeling his pulse; "the circulation is now full and regular, the lungs are free. The reaction is complete. You are saved."

At this moment, the last shreds of cotton had burned out. The trivets were withdrawn, and on the skeleton trunk of Rodin were seen four large round blisters. The skin still smoked, and the raw flesh was visible beneath. In one of his sudden movements a lamp had been misplaced, and one of these burns was larger than the others, presenting as it were to the eye a double circle.

Rodin looked down upon his wounds. After some seconds of silent contemplation, a strange smile curled his lips. Without changing his position, he glanced at Father d'Aigrigny with an expression impossible to describe, and said to him, as he slowly counted the wounds, touching them with his flat and dirty nail:

"Father d'Aigrigny, what an omen! — Look here! one Rennepont — two Renneponts — three Renneponts — four Renneponts — where is then the fifth! — Ah! here — this wound will count for two. They are twins."

And he emitted a little, dry, bitter laugh. Father d'Aigrigny, the cardinal, and Dr. Baleinier alone understood the sense of these mysterious and fatal words, which Rodin soon completed by a terrible allusion, as he exclaimed, with prophetic voice and almost inspired air:

"Yes, I say it. The impious race will be reduced to ashes, like the fragments of this poor flesh. I say it, and it will be so. I said I would live — and I do live!"

CHAPTER XIX

VICE AND VIRTUE

TWO days have elapsed since Rodin was miraculously restored to life. The reader will not have forgotten the house in the Rue Clovis, where the reverend father had an apartment, and where also was the lodging of Philemon, inhabited by Rose-Pompon.

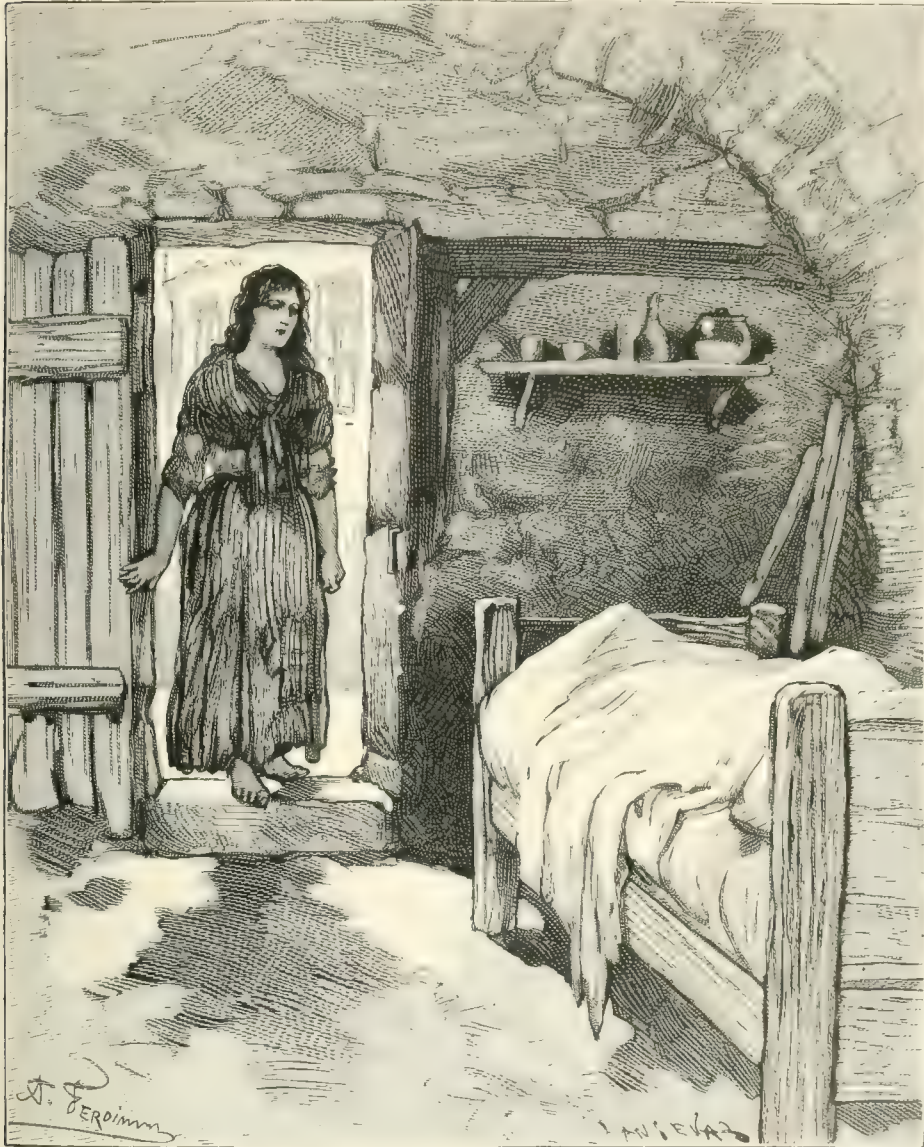
It is about three o'clock in the afternoon. A bright ray of light, penetrating through a round hole in the door of Mother Arsène's subterraneous shop, forms a striking contrast with the darkness of this cavern. The ray streams full upon a melancholy object. In the midst of fagots and faded vegetables, and close to a great heap of charcoal, stands a wretched bed; beneath the sheet, which covers it, can be traced the stiff and angular proportions of a corpse. It is the body of Mother Arsène herself, who died two days before, of the cholera. The burials have been so numerous that there has been no time to remove her remains.

The Rue Clovis is almost deserted. A mournful silence reigns without, often broken by the sharp whistling of the north wind. Between the squalls, one hears a sort of pattering. It is the noise of the large rats, running to and fro across the heap of charcoal.

Suddenly another sound is heard, and these unclean animals fly to hide themselves in their holes. Some one is trying to force open the door which communicates between the shop and the passage. It offers but little resistance, and in a few seconds the worn-out lock gives way, and a woman enters. For a short time she stands motionless in the obscurity of the damp and icy cave. After a minute's hesitation the woman advances, and the ray of light illumines the features of the Bacchanal Queen. Slowly, she approached the funeral couch.

Since the death of Jacques, the alteration in the countenance of Cephyse had gone on increasing. Fearfully pale, with her fine black hair in disorder, her legs and feet naked, she was barely covered with an old patched petticoat and a very ragged handkerchief.

When she came near the bed, she cast a glance of almost savage assurance at the shroud. Suddenly she drew back, with a low cry of involuntary terror. The sheet moved with a rapid undulation, extend-



ing from the feet to the head of the corpse. But soon the sight of a rat, flying along the side of the worm-eaten bedstead, explained the movement of the shroud. Recovering from her fright, Cephyse began to look for several things, and collected them in haste, as though she

dreaded being surprised in the miserable shop. First, she seized a basket and filled it with charcoal; then, looking from side to side, she discovered in a corner an earthen pot, which she took with a burst of ominous joy.

"It is not all, it is not all," said Cephyse, as she continued to search with an unquiet air.

At last she perceived near the stove a little tin box containing flint, steel, and matches. She placed these articles on the top of the basket, and took it in one hand, and the earthen pot in the other. As she passed near the corpse of the poor charcoal-dealer, Cephyse said, with a strange smile :

"I rob you, poor Mother Arsène, but my theft will not do me much good."

Cephyse left the shop, reclosed the door as well as she could, went up the passage, and crossed the little court-yard which separated the front of the building from that part in which Rodin had lodged. With the exception of the windows of Philemon's apartment, where Rose-Pompon had so often sat perched like a bird, warbling Béranger, the other windows of the house were open. There had been deaths on the first and second floors, and, like many others, they were waiting for the cart piled up with coffins.

The Bacchanal Queen gained the stairs which led to the chambers formerly occupied by Rodin. Arrived at the landing-place, she ascended another ruinous staircase, steep as a ladder, and with nothing but an old rope for a rail. She at length reached the half-rotten door of a garret, situated in the roof.

The house was in such a state of dilapidation that in many places the roof gave admission to the rain, and allowed it to penetrate into this cell, which was not above ten feet square, and lighted by an attic window. All the furniture consisted of an old straw mattress, laid upon the ground, with the straw peeping out from a rent in its ticking; a small earthenware pitcher, with the spout broken, and containing a little water, stood by the side of this couch.

Dressed in rags, Mother Bunch was seated on the side of the mattress, with her elbows on her knees, and her face concealed in her thin, white hands. When Cephyse entered the room, the adopted sister of Agricola raised her head; her pale, mild face seemed thinner than ever, hollow with suffering, grief, misery; her eyes, red with weeping, were fixed on her sister, with an expression of mournful tenderness.

"I have what we want, sister," said Cephyse, in a low, deep voice; "in this basket there is wherewith to finish our misery."

Then, showing to Mother Bunch the articles she had just placed on the floor, she added :

"For the first time in my life, I have been a thief. It made me ashamed and frightened; I was never intended for that or worse. It is a pity," added she, with a sardonic smile.

After a moment's silence, the hunchback said to her sister, in a heart-rending tone:

"Cephyse—my dear Cephyse—are you quite determined to die?"

"How should I hesitate?" answered Cephyse, in a firm voice. "Come, sister, let us once more make our reckoning. If even I could forget my shame, and Jacques' contempt in his last moments, what would remain to me? Two courses only: first, to be honest, and work for my living. But you know that, in spite of the best will in the world, work will often fail, as it has failed for the last few days, and even when I got it, I would have to live on four to five francs a week. Live? that is to say, die by inches. I know that already, and I prefer dying at once. The other course would be to live a life of infamy; and that I will not do. Frankly, sister, between frightful misery, infamy, or death, can the choice be doubtful? Answer me!"

Then, without giving Mother Bunch time to speak, Cephyse added, in an abrupt tone:

"Besides, what is the good of discussing it? I have made up my mind, and nothing shall prevent my purpose, since all that you, dear sister, could obtain from me was a delay of a few days, to see if the cholera would not save us the trouble. To please you, I consented; the cholera has come, killed every one else in the house, but left us. You see, it is better to do one's own business," added she, again smiling bitterly.

Then she resumed: "Besides, dear sister, you also wish to finish with life."

"It is true, Cephyse," answered the seamstress, who seemed very much depressed; "but alone, one has only to answer for one's self, and to die with you," added she, shuddering, "appears like being an accomplice in your death."

"Do you wish, then, to make an end of it, I in one place, you in another? that would be agreeable!" said Cephyse, displaying in that terrible moment the sort of bitter and despairing irony which is more frequent than may be imagined in the midst of mortal anguish.

"Oh, no, no!" said the other, in alarm, "not alone; I will not die alone!"

"Do you not see, dear sister, we are right not to part? And yet," added Cephyse, in a voice of emotion, "my heart almost breaks sometimes to think that you will die like me."

"How selfish!" said the hunchback, with a faint smile. "What reasons have I to love life? What void shall I leave behind me?"

"But you are a martyr, sister," resumed Cephyse. "The priests talk of saints! Is there one of them so good as you? And yet you are about to die like me, who have always been idle, careless, sinful—while you were so hard-working, so devoted to all who suffered. What should I say? You were an angel on the earth; and yet you will die like me, who have fallen as low as a woman can fall," added the unfortunate, casting down her eyes.

"It is strange," answered Mother Bunch, thoughtfully. "Starting from the same point, we have followed different roads, and yet we have reached the same goal—disgust of life. For you, my poor sister, but a few days ago, life was so fair, so full of pleasure and of youth; and now it is equally heavy with us both. After all, I have followed to the end what was my duty," added she, mildly. "Agricola no longer needs me. He is married; he loves and is beloved; his happiness is secured. Mademoiselle de Cardoville wants for nothing. Fair, rich, prosperous—what could a poor creature like myself do for her? Those who have been kind to me are happy. What prevents my going now to my rest? I am so weary!"

"Poor sister!" said Cephyse, with touching emotion, which seemed to expand her contracted features; "when I think that, without informing me, and in spite of your resolution never to see that generous young lady who protected you, you yet had the courage to drag yourself to her house, dying with fatigue and want, to try to interest her in my fate—yes, dying, for your strength failed on the Champs-Élysées."

"And when I was able to reach the mansion, Mademoiselle de Cardoville was unfortunately absent—very unfortunately!" repeated the hunchback, as she looked at Cephyse with anguish; "for the next day, seeing that our last resource had failed us, thinking more of me than of yourself, and determined at any price to procure us bread——"

She could not finish. She buried her face in her hands and shuddered.

"Well, I did as so many other hapless women have done when work fails or wages do not suffice, and hunger becomes too pressing," replied Cephyse in a broken voice; "only that, unlike so many others, instead of living on my shame, I shall die of it."

"Alas! this terrible shame which kills you, my poor Cephyse, because you have a heart, would have been averted had I seen Mademoiselle de Cardoville, or had she but answered the letter which I asked leave to write to her at the porter's lodge. But her silence proves to me that she is justly hurt at my abrupt departure from her house. I can understand it; she believes me guilty of the blackest ingratitude—for she must have been greatly offended not to have deigned to answer me—

and therefore I had not the courage to write a second time. It would have been useless, I am sure; for, good and just as she is, her refusals are inexorable when she believes them deserved. And besides, for what good? It was too late; you had resolved to die."

"Oh, yes, quite resolved; for my infamy was gnawing at my heart. Jacques had died in my arms despising me; and I loved him — mark me, sister," added Cephyse, with passionate enthusiasm, "I loved him as we love only once in life!"

"Let our fate be accomplished, then!" said Mother Bunch, with a pensive air.

"But you have never told me, sister, the cause of your departure from Mademoiselle de Cardoville's," resumed Cephyse, after a moment's silence.

"It will be the only secret that I shall take with me, dear Cephyse," said the other, casting down her eyes.

And she thought, with bitter joy, that she would soon be delivered from the fear which had poisoned the last days of her sad life — the fear of meeting Agricola, informed of the fatal and ridiculous love she felt for him.

For, it must be said, this fatal and despairing love was one of the causes of the suicide of the unfortunate creature. Since the disappearance of her journal, she believed that the blacksmith knew the melancholy secret contained in its sad pages. She doubted not the generosity and good heart of Agricola; but she had such doubts of herself, she was so ashamed of this passion, however pure and noble, that, even in the extremity to which Cephyse and herself were reduced — wanting work, wanting bread — no power on earth could have induced her to meet Agricola, in an attempt to ask him for assistance.

Doubtless, she would have taken another view of the subject if her mind had not been obscured by that sort of dizziness to which the firmest characters are exposed when their misfortunes surpass all bounds. Misery, hunger, the influence, almost contagious in such a moment, of the suicidal ideas of Cephyse, and weariness of a life so long devoted to pain and mortification, gave the last blow to the sewing-girl's reasons. After long struggling against the fatal design of her sister, the poor, dejected, broken-hearted creature finished by determining to share Cephyse's fate, and seek in death the end of so many evils.

"Of what are you thinking, sister?" said Cephyse, astonished at the long silence.

The other replied, trembling:

"I think of that which made me leave Mademoiselle de Cardoville so abruptly and appear so ungrateful in her eyes. May the fatality which

drove me from her house have made no other victims! may my devoted service, however obscure and powerless, never be missed by her, who extended her noble hand to the poor seamstress, and deigned to call me sister! May she be happy — oh, ever happy!" said Mother Bunch, clasping her hands with the ardor of a sincere invocation.

"That is noble, sister — such a wish in such a moment!" said Cephyse.

"Oh," said her sister, with energy, "I loved, I admired that marvel of genius, and heart, and ideal beauty — I viewed her with pious respect — for never was the power of the Divinity revealed in a more adorable and purer creation. At least one of my last thoughts will have been of her."

"Yes, you will have loved and respected your generous patroness to the last."

"To the last!" said the poor girl, after a moment's silence. "It is true — you are right — it will soon be the last! — in a few moments, all will be finished. See how calmly we can talk of that which frightens so many others!"

"Sister, we are calm because we are resolved."

"Quite resolved, Cephyse?" said the hunchback, casting once more a deep and penetrating glance upon her sister.

"Oh, yes, if you are only as determined as I am."

"Be satisfied; if I put off from day to day the final moment," answered the seamstress, "it was because I wished to give you time to reflect. As for me —"

She did not finish, but she shook her head with an air of the utmost despondency.

"Well, sister, let us kiss each other," said Cephyse; "and, courage!"

The hunchback rose, and threw herself into her sister's arms. They held one another fast in a long embrace. There followed a few seconds of deep and solemn silence, only interrupted by the sobs of the sisters, for now they had begun to weep.

"Oh, heaven! to love each other so, and to part for ever!" said Cephyse. "It is a cruel fate."

"To part?" cried Mother Bunch, and her pale, mild countenance, bathed in tears, was suddenly illumined with a ray of divine hope; "to part, sister? oh, no! What makes me so calm is the deep and certain expectation, which I feel here at my heart, of that better world where a better life awaits us. God, so great, so merciful, so prodigal of good, cannot destine His creatures to be for ever miserable. Selfish men may pervert His benevolent designs, and reduce their brethren to a state of suffering and despair. Let us pity the wicked and leave them! Come

up on high, sister; men are nothing there, where God is all. We shall do well there. Let us depart, for it is late."

So saying, she pointed to the ruddy beams of the setting sun, which began to shine upon the window.

Carried away by the religious enthusiasm of her sister, whose countenance, transfigured, as it were, by the hope of an approaching deliverance, gleamed brightly in the reflected sunset, Cephyse took her hands, and, looking at her with deep emotion, exclaimed:

"Oh, sister! how beautiful you look now!"

"Then my beauty comes rather late in the day," said Mother Bunch, with a sad smile.

"No, sister; for you appear so happy, that the last scruples I had upon your account are quite gone."

"Then let us make haste," said the hunchback, as she pointed to the chafing-dish.

"Be satisfied, sister—it will not be long," said Cephyse.

And she took the chafing-dish full of charcoal, which she had placed in a corner of the garret, and brought it out into the middle of the room.

"Do you know how to manage it?" asked the sewing-girl, approaching.

"Oh! it is very simple," answered Cephyse; "we have only to close door and window, and light the charcoal."

"Yes, sister; but I think I have heard that every opening must be well stopped, so as to admit no current of air."

"You are right, and the door shuts so badly."

"And look at the holes in the roof."

"What is to be done, sister?"

"I will tell you," said Mother Bunch. "The straw of our mattress, well twisted, will answer every purpose."

"Certainly," replied Cephyse. "We will keep a little to light our fire, and with the rest we will stop up all the crevices in the roof, and make filling for our doors and windows."

Then, smiling with that bitter irony, so frequent, we repeat, in the most gloomy moments, Cephyse added:

"I say, sister, weather-boards at our doors and windows, to prevent the air from getting in; what a luxury! we are as delicate as rich people."

"At such a time we may as well try to make ourselves a little comfortable," said Mother Bunch, trying to jest like the Bacchanal Queen.

And with incredible coolness, the two began to twist the straw into lengths of braid, small enough to be stuffed into the cracks of the door, and also constructed large plugs destined to stop up the crevices in the roof. While this mournful occupation lasted there was no departure from the calm and sad resignation of the two unfortunate creatures.

CHAPTER XX

SUICIDE



CEPHYSE and her sister continued with calmness the preparations for their death.

Alas! how many poor young girls, like these sisters, have been, and still will be, fatally driven to seek in suicide a refuge from despair, from infamy, or from a too miserable existence!

And upon society will rest the terrible responsibility of these sad deaths, so long as thousands of human creatures, unable to live upon the mockery of wages granted to their labor, have to choose between these three gulfs of shame and woe:

A life of enervating toil and mortal privations, causes of premature death.

Prostitution, which kills also, but slowly—by contempt, brutality, and disease.

Suicide—which kills at once.

Cephyse and her sister are symbols of two classes of working-women.

Some, like the latter, virtuous, laborious, tireless, struggle energetically against temptation and the fatigues of a task beyond their strength. Humble, gentle, resigned, they go on as long as they can go, frail, sick, and in pain—for they nearly always are cold and hungry, and have neither rest, air, or sun—to the end, till, enfeebled by labor and misery, their forces fail. Then, attacked by debilitating disease, they fade away in the hospitals and fill the dissecting-rooms; in life and in death always exploited by the living.

Others, less patient, light a little charcoal, and tired, as the little hunchback said,—tired of this dull, somber, joyless life, without memories, without hopes,—they sink into eternal sleep, without cursing the world that has left them only a choice of death.

Others, again, like Cephyse, endowed with lively, ardent natures, with warm blood and strong passions, cannot resign themselves to live on a salary that will not satisfy their hunger. Amusements, however

modest, dress, however humble, wants as imperious as hunger to most of this class, cannot be thought of. Then some lover comes; he talks of balls, dances, rides in the country, to a girl palpitating with youth



and nailed to a chair eighteen hours a day, in a dull garret; the tempter talks of new and pretty dresses to a girl whose gown does not keep out the cold; he speaks of suppers and dinners, while the dry bread she devours is far from satisfying her appetite. Then she yields; then the

lover is tired and abandons her; but the habit of idleness has been acquired, the fear of want has increased as her life has been refined, ever incessant toil will not suffice for her expenses; and then, step by step, she sinks into infamy, and, as Cephyse said, some live in it . . . others die.

For all these vices and miseries the first sole cause is "the impossibility of gaining a living."

For this an egoist society is responsible; for it is not because employers are hard or unjust, but because they themselves, suffering cruelly from anarchic competition, and crushed under an industrial feudal system, are compelled to keep lowering salaries to avoid ruin.

If the question were placed before our legislators, what would they say? They would say, it was terrible, that they lamented it, but

"WE CAN DO NOTHING!"

A day will come when society will regret its carelessness, when the rich of this world will have to demand an account from those who now govern, for they could, without violence, with any crisis secure the content of the workmen and the tranquillity of the rich.

While waiting for some solutions of these painful questions, which are of interest to the future of society and the world, many poor creatures, like the two sisters of this story, die of want and despair.

In a few minutes the two sisters had constructed, with the straw of their couch, the calkings necessary to intercept the air, and to render suffocation more expeditious and certain.

The hunchback said to her sister:

"You are the taller, Cephyse, and must look to the ceiling; I will take care of the window and door."

"Be satisfied, sister; I shall have finished before you," answered Cephyse.

And the two began carefully to stop up every crevice through which a current of air could penetrate into the ruined garret. Thanks to her tall stature, Cephyse was able to reach the holes in the roof, and to close them up entirely. When they had finished this sad work, the sisters again approached, and looked at each other in silence.

The fatal moment drew near; their faces, though still calm, seemed slightly agitated by that strange excitement which always accompanies a double suicide.

"Now," said Mother Bunch, "now for the fire!"

She knelt down before the little chafing-dish, filled with charcoal. But Cephyse took hold of her under the arms and obliged her to rise again, saying to her:

"Let me light the fire — that is my business."

"But, Cephyse ——"

"You know, poor sister, that the smell of charcoal gives you the headache!"

At the simplicity of this speech, for the Bacchanal Queen had spoken seriously, the sisters could not forbear smiling sadly.

"Never mind," resumed Cephyse; "why suffer more and sooner than is necessary?"

Then pointing to the mattress, which still contained a little straw, Cephyse added:

"Lie down there, good little sister; when our fire is alight, I will come and sit down by you."

"Do not be long, Cephyse."

"In five minutes it will be done."

The tall building, which faced the street, was separated by a narrow court from that which contained the retreat of the two sisters, and was so much higher that, when the sun had once disappeared behind its lofty roof, the garret soon became dark. The light, passing through the dirty panes of the small window, fell faintly on the blue and white patchwork of the old mattress, on which Mother Bunch was now stretched, covered with rags. Leaning on her left arm, with her chin resting in the palm of her hand, she looked after her sister with an expression of heart-rending grief. Cephyse, kneeling over the chafing-dish, with her face close to the black charcoal, above which already played a little bluish flame, exerted herself to blow the newly-kindled fire, which was reflected on the pale countenance of the unhappy girl.

The silence was deep. No sound was heard but the panting breath of Cephyse, and, at intervals, the slight crackling of the charcoal, which began to burn, and already sent forth a faint, sickening vapor.

Cephyse, seeing the fire completely lighted, and feeling already a little dizzy, rose from the ground, and said to her sister, as she approached her:

"It is done!"

"Sister," answered Mother Bunch, kneeling on the mattress, while Cephyse remained standing, "how shall we place ourselves? I should like to be near you to the last."

"Stop!" said Cephyse, half executing the measures of which she spoke, "I will sit on the mattress with my back against the wall. Now, little sister, you lie there. Lean your head upon my knees and give me your hand. Are you comfortable so?"

"Yes — but I cannot see you."

"That is better. It seems there is a moment — very short, it is true

—in which one suffers a good deal. And,” added Cephyse, in a voice of emotion, “it will be as well not to see each other suffer.”

“You are right, Cephyse.”

“Let me kiss that beautiful hair for the last time,” said Cephyse, as she pressed her lips to the silky locks which crowned the hunchback’s pale and melancholy countenance, “and then — we will remain very quiet.”

“Sister, your hand,” said the sewing-girl; “for the last time, your hand — and then, as you say, we will move no more. We shall not have to wait long, I think, for I begin to feel dizzy. And you, sister?”

“Not yet,” replied Cephyse; “I only perceive the smell of the charcoal.”

“Do you know where they will bury us?” said Mother Bunch, after a moment’s silence.

“No. Why do you ask?”

“Because I should like it to be Père-la-Chaise. I went there once with Agricola and his mother. What a fine view there is! — and then the trees, the flowers, the marble — do you know the dead are better lodged — than the living — and ——”

“What is the matter, sister?” said Cephyse to her companion, who had stopped short, after speaking in a slow voice.

“I am giddy — my temples throb,” was the answer. “How do you feel?”

“I only begin to be a little faint; it is strange — the effect is slower with me than you.”

“Oh! you see,” said Mother Bunch, trying to smile, “I was always so forward. At school, do you remember, they said I was before the others. And now it happens again.”

“I hope soon to overtake you this time,” said Cephyse.

What astonished the sisters was quite natural. Though weakened by sorrow and misery, the Bacchanal Queen, with a constitution as robust as the other was frail and delicate, was necessarily longer than her sister in feeling the effects of the deleterious vapor.

After a moment’s silence, Cephyse resumed, as she laid her hand on the head she still held upon her knees:

“You say nothing, sister! You suffer; is it not so?”

“No,” said Mother Bunch, in a weak voice; “my eyelids are heavy as lead — I am getting benumbed — I feel that I speak more slowly — but I have no acute pain. And you, sister?”

“While you were speaking I felt giddy; and now my temples throb violently.”

"As it was with me just now. One would think it was more painful and difficult to die!"

Then, after a moment's silence, the hunchback said suddenly to her sister:

"Do you think that Agricola will much regret me, and think of me for some time?"

"How can you ask?" said Cephyse, in a tone of reproach.

"You are right," answered Mother Bunch, mildly; "there is a bad feeling in such a doubt—but if you knew ——"

"What, sister?"

The other hesitated for an instant, and then said, dejectedly, "Nothing." Afterward she added:

"Fortunately, I die convinced that he will never miss me. He married a charming girl, who loves him, I am sure, and will make him perfectly happy."

As she pronounced these last words, the speaker's voice grew fainter and fainter. Suddenly she started, and said to Cephyse, in a trembling, almost frightened tone:

"Sister!—hold me in your arms—I am afraid—everything looks dark—everything is turning round."

And the unfortunate girl, raising herself a little, hid her face in her sister's bosom and threw her weak arms around her.

"Courage, sister!" said Cephyse, in a voice which was also growing faint, as she pressed her closer to her bosom; "it will soon be over."

And Cephyse added, with a kind of envy:

"Oh! why does my sister's strength fail so much sooner than mine? I have still my perfect senses, and I suffer less than she does. Oh! if I thought she would die first!—But, no—I will go and hold my face over the chafing-dish, rather."

At the movement Cephyse made to rise, a feeble pressure from her sister held her back.

"You suffer, my poor child!" said Cephyse, trembling.

"Oh, yes! a good deal now—do not leave me!"

"And I scarcely at all," said Cephyse, gazing wildly at the chafing-dish. "Ah!" added she, with a kind of fatal joy; "now I begin to feel it—I choke—my head is ready to split."

And indeed the destructive gas now filled the little chamber, from which it had by degrees driven all the air fit for respiration. The day was closing in, and the gloomy garret was only lighted by the reflection of the burning charcoal, which threw a red glare on the sisters, locked in each other's arms. Suddenly Mother Bunch made some slight convulsive movements, and pronounced these words in a failing voice:

"Agricola — Mademoiselle de Cardoville — Oh! farewell! — Agricola — I —"

Then she murmured some unintelligible words; the convulsive movements ceased, and her arms, which had been clasped round Cephyse, fell inert upon the mattress.

"Sister!" cried Cephyse, in alarm, as she raised Mother Bunch's head to look at her face. "Not already, sister! And I? and I?"

The sewing-girl's mild countenance was not paler than usual. Only, her eyes, half-closed, seemed no longer to see anything, and a half-smile of mingled grief and goodness lingered an instant about her violet lips, from which stole the almost imperceptible breath; and then the mouth became motionless and the face assumed a great serenity of expression.

"But you must not die before me!" cried Cephyse, in a heart-rending tone, as she covered with kisses the cold cheek. "Wait for me, sister! wait for me!"

Mother Bunch did not answer. The head, which Cephyse let slip from her hands, fell back gently on the mattress.

"My God! It is not my fault, if we do not die together!" cried Cephyse in despair, as she knelt beside the couch on which the other lay motionless.

"Dead!" she murmured in terror. "Dead before me! — Perhaps it is, that I am the strongest. Ah! it begins — fortunately — like her, I see everything dark blue — I suffer — what happens! — I can scarcely breathe. Sister!" she added, as she threw her arms around her loved one's neck; "I am coming — I am here!"

At the same instant, the sound of footsteps and voices was heard from the staircase. Cephyse had still presence of mind enough to distinguish the sound. Stretched beside the body of her sister, she raised her head hastily.

The noise approached, and a voice was heard exclaiming, not far from the door:

"Good Heavens! what a smell of fire!"

And, at the same instant, the door was violently shaken, and another voice exclaimed:

"Open! open!"

"They will come in — they will save me — and my sister is dead. — Oh, no! I will not have the baseness to survive her!"

Such was the last thought of Cephyse. Using what little strength she had left, she ran to the window and opened it — and, at the same instant that the half-broken door yielded to a vigorous effort from without, the unfortunate creature precipitated herself from that third story

into the court below. Just then, Adrienne and Agricola appeared on the threshold of the chamber.

In spite of the stifling odor of the charcoal, Mademoiselle de Cardoville rushed into the garret, and, seeing the stove, exclaimed:

“The unhappy girl has killed herself!”

“No, she has thrown herself from the window,” cried Agricola; for, at the moment of breaking open the door, he had seen a human form disappear in that direction, and he now ran to the window.

“Oh! this is frightful!” he exclaimed, with a cry of horror, as he put his hand before his eyes, and returned pale and terrified to Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

But, misunderstanding the cause of his terror, Adrienne, who had just perceived Mother Bunch through the darkness, hastened to answer:

“No! she is here.”

And she pointed to the pale form stretched on the mattress, beside which Adrienne now threw herself on her knees. Grasping the hands of the poor seamstress, she found them as cold as ice. Laying her hand on her heart, she could not feel it beat. Yet, in a few seconds, as the fresh air rushed into the room from the door and window, Adrienne thought she remarked an almost imperceptible pulsation, and she exclaimed:

“Her heart beats! Run quickly for help! Luckily, I have my smelling-bottle.”

“Yes, yes! help for her—and for the other too, if it is yet time!” cried the smith in despair, as he rushed down the stairs, leaving Mademoiselle de Cardoville still kneeling by the side of the mattress.

CHAPTER XXI

CONFESSIONS

DURING the painful scene that we have just described, a lively emotion glowed in the countenance of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, grown pale and thin with sorrow. Her cheeks, once so full, were now slightly hollowed, while a faint line of transparent azure encircled those large black eyes, no longer so bright as formerly. But the charming lips, though contracted by painful anxiety, had retained their rich and velvet moisture.

To attend more easily to Mother Bunch, Adrienne had thrown aside her bonnet, and the silky waves of her beautiful golden hair almost concealed her face as she bent over the mattress, rubbing the thin, ivory hands of the poor seamstress, completely called to life by the salubrious freshness of the air, and by the strong action of the salts which Adrienne carried in her smelling-bottle. Luckily, Mother Bunch had fainted, rather from emotion and weakness than from the effects of suffocation, the senses of the unfortunate girl having failed her before the deleterious gas had attained its highest degree of intensity.

Before continuing the recital of the scene between the seamstress and the patrician, a few retrospective words will be necessary. Since the strange adventure at the theater of the Porte Saint-Martin, where Djalma, at peril of his life, rushed upon the black panther in sight of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, the young lady had been deeply affected in various ways. Forgetting her jealousy, and the humiliation she had suffered in presence of Djalma — of Djalma exhibiting himself before every one with a woman so little worthy of him — Adrienne was for a moment dazzled by the chivalrous and heroic action of the prince, and said to herself: "In spite of odious appearances, Djalma loves me enough to brave death in order to pick up my nosegay."

But with a soul so delicate as that of this young lady, a character so generous, and a mind so true, reflection was certain soon to demonstrate the vanity of such consolations, powerless to cure the cruel wounds of offended dignity and love.



THE UNHAPPY GIRL THROWS HERSELF FROM THE WINDOW.

"How many times," said Adrienne to herself, and with reason, "has the prince encountered, in hunting, from pure caprice and with no gain, such danger as he braved in picking up my bouquet! and then, who tells me he did not mean to offer it to the woman who accompanied him?"

Singular (it may be) in the eyes of the world, but just and great in those of heaven, the ideas which Adrienne cherished with regard to love, joined to her natural pride, presented an invincible obstacle to the thought of her succeeding this woman (whoever she might be), thus publicly displayed by the prince as his mistress. And yet Adrienne hardly dared avow to herself that she experienced a feeling of jealousy, only the more painful and humiliating the less her rival appeared worthy to be compared to her.

At other times, on the contrary, in spite of a conscious sense of her own value, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, remembering the charming countenance of Rose-Pompon, asked herself if the bad taste and improper manners of this pretty creature resulted from precocious and depraved effrontery, or from a complete ignorance of the usages of society. In the latter case, such ignorance, arising from a simple and ingenuous nature, might in itself have a great charm; and if to this attraction, combined with that of incontestable beauty, were added sincere love and a pure soul, the obscure birth or neglected education of the girl might be of little consequence, and she might be capable of inspiring Djalma with a profound passion.

If Adrienne hesitated to see a lost creature in Rose-Pompon, notwithstanding unfavorable appearances, it was because, remembering what so many travelers had related of Djalma's greatness of soul, and recalling the conversation she had overheard between him and Rodin, she could not bring herself to believe that a man of such remarkable intelligence, with so tender a heart, so poetical, imaginative, and enthusiastic a mind could be capable of loving a depraved and vulgar creature, and of openly exhibiting himself in public along with her. There was a mystery in the transaction which Adrienne sought in vain to penetrate.

These trying doubts, this cruel curiosity, only served to nourish Adrienne's fatal love; and we may imagine her incurable despair when she found that the indifference, or even disdain, of Djalma was unable to stifle a passion that now burned more fiercely than ever. Sometimes, having recourse to notions of fatality, she fancied that she was destined to feel this love, that Djalma must therefore deserve it, and that one day whatever was incomprehensible in the conduct of the prince would be explained to his advantage. At other times, on the contrary, she felt ashamed of excusing Djalma, and the consciousness of this weakness

was for Adrienne a constant occasion for remorse and torture. The victim of all these agonies, she lived in perfect solitude.

The cholera soon broke out, startling as a clap of thunder. Too unhappy to fear the pestilence on her own account, Adrienne was only moved by the sorrows of others. She was amongst the first to contribute to those charitable donations, which were now flowing in from all sides in the admirable spirit of benevolence. Florine was suddenly attacked by the epidemic. In spite of the danger, her mistress insisted on seeing her, and endeavored to revive her failing courage. Conquered by this new mark of kindness, Florine could no longer conceal the treachery in which she had borne a part. Death was about to deliver her from the odious tyranny of the people whose yoke weighed upon her, and she was at length in a position to reveal everything to Adrienne.

The latter thus learned how she had been continually betrayed by Florine, and also the cause of the sewing-girl's abrupt departure. At these revelations Adrienne felt her affection and tender pity for the poor seamstress greatly increase. By her command the most active steps were taken to discover traces of the hunchback; but Florine's confession had a still more important result. Justly alarmed at this new evidence of Rodin's machinations, Adrienne remembered the projects formed, when, believing herself beloved, the instinct of affection had revealed to her the perils to which Djalma and the other members of the Rennepont family were exposed. To assemble the race around her, and bid them rally against the common enemy, such was Adrienne's first thought when she heard the confession of Florine. She regarded it as a duty to accomplish this project. In a struggle with such dangerous and powerful adversaries as Rodin, Father d'Aigrigny, the Princess de Saint-Dizier, and their allies, Adrienne saw not only the praiseworthy and perilous task of unmasking hypocrisy and cupidity, but also, if not a consolation, at least a generous diversion in the midst of terrible sorrows.

From this moment a restless, feverish activity took the place of the mournful apathy in which the young lady had languished. She called round her all the members of her family capable of answering the appeal, and, as had been mentioned in the secret note delivered to Father d'Aigrigny, the Hotel Cardoville soon became the center of the most active and unceasing operations, and also a place of meeting, in which the modes of attack and defense were fully discussed.

Perfectly correct in all points, the secret note of which we have spoken stated, as a mere conjecture, that Mademoiselle de Cardoville had granted an interview to Djalma. This fact was untrue, but the cause which led to the supposition will be explained hereafter. Far

from such being the case, Mademoiselle de Cardoville scarcely found, in attending to the great family interests now at stake, a momentary diversion from the fatal love which was slowly undermining her health, and with which she so bitterly reproached herself.

The morning of the day on which Adrienne, at length discovering Mother Bunch's residence, came so miraculously to rescue her from death, Agricola Baudoin had been to the Hotel Cardoville to confer on the subject of Francis Hardy, and had begged Adrienne to permit him to accompany her to the Rue Clovis, whither they repaired in haste.

Thus, once again, there was a noble spectacle, a touching symbol! Mademoiselle de Cardoville and Mother Bunch, the two extremities of the social chain, were united on equal terms—for the seamstress and the fair patrician were equal in intelligence and heart—and equal also, because the one was the ideal of riches, grace, and beauty, and the other the ideal of resignation and unmerited misfortune—and does not a halo rest on misfortune borne with courage and dignity?

Stretched on her mattress, the hunchback appeared so weak, that even if Agricola had not been detained on the ground-floor with Cephyse, now dying a dreadful death, Mademoiselle de Cardoville would have waited some time before inducing Mother Bunch to rise and accompany her to her carriage.

Thanks to the presence of mind and pious fraud of Adrienne, the sewing-girl was persuaded that Cephyse had been carried to a neighboring hospital, to receive the necessary succors, which promised to be crowned with success. The hunchback's faculties recovering slowly from their stupor, she at first received this fable without the least suspicion—for she did not even know that Agricola had accompanied Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

"And it is to you, mademoiselle, that Cephyse and I owe our lives," said she, turning her mild and melancholy face toward Adrienne; "*mon*, kneeling in this garret, near this couch of misery, where I and my sister meant to die—for you assure me that Cephyse was succored in time?"

"Be satisfied! I was told just now that she was recovering her senses."

"And they told her I was living, did they not? Otherwise, she would perhaps regret having survived me."

"Be quite easy, my dear girl!" said Adrienne, pressing the poor hands in her own, and gazing on her with eyes full of tears: "they have told her all that was proper. Do not trouble yourself about anything: only think of recovering—and I hope you will yet enjoy that happiness of which you have known so little, my poor child."

"How kind you are! After flying from your house—and when you must think me so ungrateful!"

"Presently, when you are not so weak, I have a great deal to tell you. Just now, it would fatigue you too much. But how do you feel?"

"Better, mademoiselle. This fresh air—and then the thought that since you are come—my poor sister will no more be reduced to despair; for I will tell you all, and I am sure you will have pity on Cephyse—will you not?"

"Rely upon me, my child," answered Adrienne, forced to dissemble her painful embarrassment; "you know I am interested in all that interests you. But tell me," added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, in a voice of emotion, "before taking this desperate resolution, did you not write to me?"

"Yes, mademoiselle."

"Alas!" resumed Adrienne, sorrowfully; "and when you received no answer—how cruel, how ungrateful you must have thought me!"

"Oh! never did I accuse you of such feelings; my poor sister will tell you so. You had my gratitude to the last."

"I believe you—for I know your heart. But how then did you explain my silence?"

"I had justly offended you by my sudden departure, mademoiselle."

"Offended!—Alas! I never received your letter."

"And yet you know that I wrote to you?"

"Yes, my poor girl; I know also that you wrote to me at my porter's lodge. Unfortunately, he delivered your letter to one of my women, named Florine, telling her it came from you."

"Florine! the young woman that was so kind to me!"

"Florine deceived me shamefully; she was sold to my enemies, and acted as a spy on my actions."

"*She!*—Good Heavens!" cried Mother Bunch. "Is it possible?"

"She herself," answered Adrienne bitterly; "but, after all, we must pity as well as blame her. She was forced to obey by a terrible necessity, and her confession and repentance secured my pardon before her death."

"Then she is dead—so young! so fair!"

"In spite of her faults, I was greatly moved by her end. She confessed what she had done, with such heart-rending regrets. Amongst her avowals, she told me she had intercepted a letter in which you asked for an interview that might save your sister's life."

"It is true, lady; such were the terms of my letter. What interest had they to keep it from you?"

"They feared to see you return to me, my good guardian angel. You loved me so tenderly, and my enemies dreaded your faithful affec-

tion, so wonderfully aided by the admirable instinct of your heart. Ah! I shall never forget how well deserved was the horror with which you were inspired by a wretch whom I defended against your suspicions.

"M. Rodin?" said Mother Bunch, with a shudder.

"Yes," replied Adrienne; "but we will not talk of these people now. Their odious remembrance would spoil the joy I feel in seeing you restored to life—for your voice is less feeble, your cheeks are beginning to regain a little color. Thank God! I am so happy to have found you once more;—if you knew all that I hope, all that I expect from our reunion—for we will not part again—promise me that, in the name of our friendship."

"I—your friend!" said Mother Bunch, timidly casting down her eyes.

"A few days before your departure from my house, did I not call you my friend, my sister? What is there changed? Nothing, nothing," added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with deep emotion. "One might say, on the contrary, that a fatal resemblance in our positions renders your friendship even dearer to me. And I shall have it, shall I not? Oh, do not refuse me—I am so much in want of a friend!"

"You, mademoiselle? you in want of the friendship of a poor creature like me?"

"Yes," answered Adrienne, as she gazed on the other with an expression of intense grief; "nay, more, you are perhaps the only person to whom I could venture to confide my bitter sorrows."

So saying, Mademoiselle de Cardoville colored deeply.

"And how do I deserve such marks of confidence?" asked Mother Bunch, more and more surprised.

"You deserve it by the delicacy of your heart, by the steadiness of your character," answered Adrienne, with some hesitation; "then—you are a woman—and I am certain you will understand what I suffer, and pity me."

"Pity you, mademoiselle?" said the other, whose astonishment continued to increase. "You, a great lady, and so much envied—I, so humble and despised, pity you?"

"Tell me, my poor friend," resumed Adrienne, after some moments of silence, "are not the worst griefs those which we dare not avow to any one, for fear of raillery and contempt? How can we venture to ask interest or pity for sufferings that we hardly dare avow to ourselves, because they make us blush?"

The sewing-girl could hardly believe what she heard. Had her benefactress felt, like her, the effects of an unfortunate passion, she could not have held any other language. But the seamstress could not admit such a supposition; so, attributing to some other cause the sor-

rows of Adrienne, she answered mournfully, while she thought of her own fatal love for Agricola:

"Oh! yes, mademoiselle. A secret grief, of which we are ashamed, must be frightful—very frightful!"

"But then what happiness to meet, not only a heart noble enough to inspire complete confidence, but one which has itself been tried by a thousand sorrows, and is capable of affording you pity, support, and counsel! Tell me, my dear child," added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, as she looked attentively at Mother Bunch, "if you were weighed down by one of those sorrows at which one blushes, would you not be happy, very happy, to find a kindred soul to whom you might intrust your griefs, and half relieve them by entire and merited confidence?"

For the first time in her life Mother Bunch regarded Mademoiselle de Cardoville with a feeling of suspicion and sadness.

The last words of the young lady seemed to her full of meaning.

"Doubtless she knows my secret," said Mother Bunch to herself; "doubtless my journal has fallen into her hands. She knows my love for Agricola, or at least suspects it. What she has been saying to me is intended to provoke my confidence, and to assure herself if she has been rightly informed.

These thoughts excited in the workgirl's mind no bitter or ungrateful feeling toward her benefactress; but the heart of the unfortunate girl was so delicately susceptible on the subject of her fatal passion that, in spite of her deep and tender affection for Mademoiselle de Cardoville, she suffered cruelly at the thought of Adrienne's being mistress of her secret.

CHAPTER XXII

MORE CONFESSIONS

THE fancy, at first so painful, that Mademoiselle de Cardoville was informed of her love for Agricola, was soon exchanged in the hunchback's heart, thanks to the generous instincts of that rare and excellent creature, for a touching regret, which showed all her attachment and veneration for Adrienne.

"Perhaps," said Mother Bunch to herself, "conquered by the influence of the adorable kindness of my protectress, I might have made to her a confession which I could make to none other, and revealed a secret which I thought to carry with me to my grave. It would at least have been a mark of gratitude to Mademoiselle de Cardoville; but, unfortunately, I am now deprived of the sad comfort of confiding my only secret to my benefactress. And then, however generous may be her pity for me, however intelligent her affection, she cannot—she that is so fair and so much admired—she cannot understand how frightful is the position of a creature like myself, hiding in the depths of a wounded heart a love at once hopeless and ridiculous. No, no—in spite of the delicacy of her attachment, my benefactress must unconsciously hurt my feelings, even while she pities me; for only sympathetic sorrows can console each other. Alas! why did she not leave me to die?"

These reflections presented themselves to the thinker's mind as rapidly as thought could travel. Adrienne observed her attentively; she remarked that the sewing-girl's countenance, which had lately brightened up, was again clouded, and expressed a feeling of painful humiliation. Terrified at this relapse into gloomy dejection, the consequences of which might be serious, for Mother Bunch was still very weak, and, as it were, hovering on the brink of the grave, Mademoiselle de Cardoville resumed hastily:

"My friend, do not you think with me that the most cruel and humiliating grief admits of consolation, when it can be intrusted to a faithful and devoted heart?"

"Yes, mademoiselle," said the young seamstress bitterly; "but the heart which suffers in silence should be the only judge of the moment for making so painful a confession. Until then, it would perhaps be more humane to respect its fatal secret, even if one had by chance discovered it."

"You are right, my child," said Adrienne sorrowfully; "if I choose this solemn moment to intrust you with a very painful secret, it is that, when you have heard me, I am sure you will set more value on your life, as knowing how much I need your tenderness, consolation, and pity."

At these words, the other half-raised herself on the mattress, and looked at Mademoiselle de Cardoville in amazement.

She could scarcely believe what she heard; far from designing to intrude upon her confidence, it was her protectress who was to make the painful confession, and who came to implore pity and consolation from her!

"What!" stammered she; "you, mademoiselle."

"I come to tell you that I suffer, and am ashamed of my sufferings. Yes," added the young lady, with a touching expression, "yes — of all confessions, I am about to make the most painful — I love — and I blush for my love."

"Like myself!" cried Mother Bunch, involuntarily, clasping her hands together.

"I love," resumed Adrienne, with a long-pent-up grief; "I love, and am not beloved — and my love is miserable, is impossible — it consumes me — it kills me — and I dare not confide to any one the fatal secret!"

"Like me," repeated the other, with a fixed look. "She — a queen in beauty, rank, wealth, intelligence — suffers like me. Like me, poor, unfortunate creature! she loves, and is not loved again."

"Well, yes! like you, I love and am not loved again," cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville; "was I wrong in saying that to you alone I could confide my secret — because, having suffered the same pangs, you alone can pity them?"

"Then, mademoiselle," said Mother Bunch, casting down her eyes, and recovering from her first amazement, "you knew —"

"I knew all, my poor child; but never should I have mentioned your secret, had I not had one to entrust you with of a still more painful nature. Yours is cruel, but mine is humiliating. Oh, my sister!" added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, in a tone impossible to describe, "misfortune, you see, blends and confounds together what are called distinctions of rank and fortune; and often those whom the world envies are reduced by suffering far below the poorest and most humble, and have to seek from the latter pity and consolation."

Then, drying her tears, which now flowed abundantly, Mademoiselle de Cardoville resumed, in a voice of emotion:



"Come, sister! courage, courage! let us love and sustain each other. Let this sad and mysterious bond unite us forever."

"Oh, mademoiselle! forgive me. But now that you know the secret of my life," said the workgirl, casting down her eyes and unable to vau-

quish her confusion, "it seems to me that I can never look at you without blushing."

"And why? because you love Agricola?" said Adrienne. "Then I must die of shame before you, since, less courageous than you, I had not the strength to suffer and be resigned, and so conceal my love in the depths of my heart. He that I love, with a love henceforth deprived of hope, knew of that love and despised it—preferring to me a woman, the very choice of whom was a new and grievous insult, if I am not much deceived by appearances. I sometimes hope that I am deceived on this point. Now, tell me—is it for you to blush?"

"Alas! who could tell you all this?"

"Which you only intrusted to your journal? Well, then, it was the dying Florine who confessed her misdeeds. She had been base enough to steal your papers, forced to this odious act by the people who had dominion over her. But she had read your journal; and as every good feeling was not dead within her, your admirable resignation, your melancholy and pious love, had left such an impression on her mind that she was able to repeat whole passages to me on her death-bed, and thus to explain the cause of your sudden disappearance—for she had no doubt that the fear of seeing your love for Agricola divulged had been the cause of your flight."

"Alas! it is but too true."

"Oh, yes!" answered Adrienne bitterly; "those who employed the wretched girl to act as she did, well knew the effect of the blow. It was not their first attempt. They reduced you to despair, they would have killed you, because you were devoted to me, and because you had guessed their intentions. Oh! these black-gowns are implacable, and their power is great!" said Adrienne, shuddering.

"It is fearful, mademoiselle."

"But do not be alarmed, dear child; you see that the arms of the wicked have turned against themselves; for the moment I knew the cause of your flight, you became dearer to me than ever. From that time I made every exertion to find out where you were; after long efforts, it was only this morning that the person I had employed succeeded in discovering that you inhabited this house. Agricola was with me when I heard it, and instantly asked to accompany me."

"Agricola!" said Mother Bunch, clasping her hands: "he came——"

"Yes, my child—be calm. While I attended to you, he was busy with your poor sister. You will soon see him."

"Alas!" resumed the hunchback in alarm. "He doubtless knows——"

"Your love? No, no; be satisfied. Only think of the happiness of again seeing your good and worthy brother."

"Ah, mademoiselle! may he never know what caused me so much shame, that I was like to die of it. Thank God, he is not aware of it!"

"Then let us have no more sad thoughts, my child. Only remember, that this worthy brother came here in time to save us from everlasting regrets—and you from a great fault. Oh! I do not speak of the prejudices of the world, with regard to the right of every creature to return to heaven a life that has become too burdensome!—I only say that you ought not to have died, because those who love you, and whom you love, were still in need of your assistance."

"I thought you happy; Agricola was married to the girl of his choice, who will, I am sure, make him happy. To whom could I be useful?"

"First, to myself, as you see—and then, who tells you that Agricola will never have need of you? Who tells you that his happiness, or that of his family, will last forever, and will not be tried by cruel shocks? And even if those you love had been destined to be always happy, could their happiness be complete without you? And would not your death, with which they would perhaps have reproached themselves, have left behind it endless regrets?"

"It is true," answered the other, "I was wrong—the dizziness of despair had seized me—frightful misery weighed upon us—we had not been able to find work for some days—we lived on the charity of a poor woman, and her the cholera carried off. To-morrow or next day, we must have died of hunger."

"Die of hunger!—and you knew where I lived!"

"I had written to you, mademoiselle, and, receiving no answer, I thought you offended at my abrupt departure."

"Poor, dear child! you must have been, as you say, seized with dizziness in that terrible moment; so that I have not the courage to reproach you for doubting me a single instant. How can I blame you? Did I not myself think of terminating my life?"

"You!" cried the hunchback.

"Yes, I thought of it—when they came to tell me that Florine, dying, wished to speak to me. I heard what she had to say: her revelations changed my projects. This dark and mournful life, which had become insupportable to me, was suddenly lighted up. The sense of duty woke within me. You were no doubt a prey to horrible misery; it was my duty to seek and save you. Florine's confessions unveiled to me the new plots of the enemy of my scattered family, dispersed by sorrows and cruel losses; it was my duty to warn them of their danger, and to unite them against the common enemy. I had been the victim of odious maneuvers; it was my duty to punish their authors, for fear that,

encouraged by impunity, these black-gowns should make other victims. Then the sense of duty gave me strength, and I was able to rouse myself from my lethargy. With the help of Abbé Gabriel, a sublime, oh! a sublime priest — the ideal of a true Christian — the worthy brother of Agricola — I courageously entered on the struggle. What shall I say to you, my child? The performance of these duties, the hope of finding you again, have been some relief to me in my trouble. If I was not consoled, I was at least occupied. Your tender friendship, the example of your resignation, will do the rest — I think so — I am sure so — and I shall forget this fatal love.”

At the moment Adrienne pronounced these words, rapid footsteps were heard upon the stairs, and a young, clear voice exclaimed:

“Oh! dear me, poor Mother Bunch! How lucky I have come just now! If only I could be of some use to her!”

Almost immediately, Rose-Pompon entered the garret with precipitation.

Agricola soon followed the grisette, and, pointing to the open window, tried to make Adrienne understand, by signs, that she was not to mention to the girl the deplorable end of the Bacchanal Queen. This pantomime was lost on Mademoiselle de Cardoville. Adrienne’s heart swelled with grief, indignation, pride, as she recognized the girl she had seen at the Porte Saint-Martin in company with Djalma, and who alone was the cause of the dreadful sufferings she endured since that fatal evening.

And, strange irony of fate! it was at the very moment when Adrienne had just made the humiliating and cruel confession of her despised love, that the woman, to whom she believed herself sacrificed, appeared before her.

If the surprise of Mademoiselle de Cardoville was great, Rose-Pompon’s was not less so. Not only did she recognize in Adrienne the fair young lady with the golden locks who had sat opposite to her at the theater, on the night of the adventure of the black panther, but she had serious reasons for desiring most ardently this unexpected interview. It is impossible to paint the look of malignant joy and triumph that she affected to cast upon Adrienne.

The first impulse of Mademoiselle de Cardoville was to quit the room. But she could not bear to leave Mother Bunch at this moment, or to give, in the presence of Agricola, her reasons for such an abrupt departure; and, moreover, an inexplicable and fatal curiosity held her back, in spite of her offended pride. She remained, therefore, and was about to examine closely, to hear and to judge, this rival, who had nearly occasioned her death, to whom, in her jealous agony, she had ascribed so many different aspects, in order to explain Djalma’s love for such a creature.

CHAPTER XXIII

THE RIVALS

ROSE-POMPON, whose presence caused such deep emotion in Mademoiselle de Cardoville, was dressed in the most showy and extravagant bad taste. Her very small, narrow, rose-colored satin bonnet, placed so forward over her face as almost to touch the tip of her little nose, left uncovered behind half of her light, silky hair; her plaid dress, of an excessively broad pattern, was open in front, and the almost transparent gauze, rather too honest in its revelations, hardly covered the charms of the form beneath.

The grisette having run all the way upstairs, held in her hands the ends of her large blue shawl, which, falling from her shoulders, had slid down to her wasp-like waist, and there been stopped by the swell of the figure. If we enter into these details, it is to explain how, at the sight of this pretty creature, dressed in so impertinent and almost indecent a fashion, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who thought she saw in her a successful rival, felt her indignation, grief, and shame redoubled.

But judge of the surprise and confusion of Adrienne when Mademoiselle Rose-Pompon said to her, with the utmost freedom and pertness:

“I am delighted to see you, madame. You and I must have a long talk together. Only I must begin by kissing poor Mother Bunch—with your permission, *madame*!”

To understand the tone and manner with which this word “*madame*” was pronounced, you must have been present at some stormy discussion between two Rose-Pompoms, jealous of each other; then you would be able to judge how much provoking hostility may be compressed into the word “*madame*,” under certain circumstances.

Amazed at the impudence of Rose-Pompon, Mademoiselle de Cardoville remained mute; while Agricola, entirely occupied with the interest he took in the workgirl, who had never withdrawn her eyes from him since he entered the room, and with the remembrance of the painful scene he had just quitted, whispered to Adrienne, without remarking the grisette’s effrontery:

"Alas, mademoiselle! it is all over. Cephyse has just breathed her last sigh, without recovering her senses."

"Unfortunate girl!" said Adrienne, with emotion; and for the moment she forgot Rose-Pompon.

"We must keep this sad news from Mother Bunch, and only let her know it hereafter, with great caution," resumed Agricola. "Luckily, little Rose-Pompon knows nothing about it."

And he pointed to the grisette, who was now stooping down by the side of the workgirl. On hearing Agricola speak so familiarly of Rose-Pompon, Adrienne's amazement increased. It is impossible to describe what she felt; yet, strangely enough, her sufferings grew less and less, and her anxiety diminished, as she listened to the chatter of the grisette.

"Oh, my good dear!" said the latter, with as much volubility as emotion, while her pretty blue eyes were filled with tears; "is it possible that you did so stupid a thing? Do not poor people help one another? Could you not apply to me? You knew that others are welcome to whatever is mine, and I would have made a raffle of Philemon's bazaar," added this singular girl, with a burst of feeling, at once sincere, touching, and grotesque; "I would have sold his three boots, pipes, boating-costume, bed, and even his great drinking-glass, and at all events you should not have been brought to such an ugly pass. Philemon would not have minded, for he is a good fellow; and if he had minded, it would have been all the same. Thank heaven! we are not married. I am only wishing to remind you that you should have thought of little Rose-Pompon."

"I know you are obliging and kind," said Mother Bunch; for she had heard from her sister that Rose-Pompon, like so many of her class, had a warm and generous heart.

"After all," resumed the grisette, wiping with the back of her hand the tip of her little nose, down which a tear was trickling, "you may tell me that you did not know where I had taken up my quarters. It's a queer story, I can tell you. When I say queer," added Rose-Pompon, with a deep sigh, "it is quite the contrary—but no matter. I need not trouble you with that. One thing is certain; you are getting better, and you and Cephyse will not do such a thing again. She is said to be very weak. Can I not see her yet, M. Agricola?"

"No," said the smith, with embarrassment, for Mother Bunch kept her eyes fixed upon him; "you must have patience."

"But I may see her to-day, Agricola?" exclaimed the hunchback.

"We will talk about that. Only be calm, I entreat."

"Agricola is right; you must be reasonable, my good dear," resumed Rose-Pompon; "we will wait patiently. I can wait too, for I have to

talk presently to this lady"; and Rose-Pompon glanced at Adrienne with the expression of an angry cat. "Yes, yes; I can wait; for I long to tell Cephyse also that she may reckon upon me." Here Rose-Pom-



pon bridled up very prettily, and thus continued, "Do not be uneasy! It is the least one can do, when one is in a good position, to share the advantages with one's friends who are not so well off. It would be a fine thing to keep one's happiness to one's self! to stuff it with straw,

and put it under a glass, and let no one touch it ! When I talk of happiness, it's only to make talk ; it is true in one sense ; but in another, you see, my good dear —— Bah ! I am only seventeen — but no matter — I might go on talking till to-morrow, and you would not be any the wiser. So let me kiss you once more, and don't be downhearted — nor Cephyse either, do you hear ? for I shall be close at hand."

And, stooping still lower, Rose-Pompon cordially embraced Mother Bunch.

It is impossible to express what Mademoiselle de Cardoville felt during this conversation, or rather during this monologue of the grissette on the subject of the attempted suicide. The eccentric jargon of Mademoiselle Rose-Pompon, her liberal facility in disposing of Philemon's bazaar, to the owner of which (as she said) she was luckily not married ; the goodness of her heart, which revealed itself in her offers of service ; her contrasts, her impertinence, her drollery ; all this was so new and inexplicable to Mademoiselle de Cardoville that she remained for some time mute and motionless with surprise.

Such, then, was the creature to whom Djalma had sacrificed her !

If Adrienne's first impression at sight of Rose-Pompon had been horribly painful, reflection soon awakened doubts, which were to become shortly ineffable hopes. Remembering the interview she had overheard between Rodin and Djalma, when, concealed in the conservatory, she had wished to prove the Jesuit's fidelity, Adrienne asked herself if it was reasonable, if it was possible to believe that the prince, whose ideas of love seemed to be so poetical, so elevated, so pure, could find any charm in the disjointed and silly chat of this young girl ? Adrienne could not hesitate ; she pronounced the thing impossible from the moment she had seen her rival near and witnessed her style both of manners and conversation, which, without detracting from the prettiness of her features, gave them a trivial and not very attractive character.

Adrienne's doubts with regard to the deep love of the prince for Rose-Pompon were hence soon changed to complete incredulity. Endowed with too much sense and penetration not to perceive that this apparent connection, so inconceivable on the part of Djalma, must conceal some mystery, Mademoiselle de Cardoville felt her hopes revive.

As this consoling thought arose in her mind, her heart, until now so painfully oppressed, began once more to dilate ; she felt vague aspirations toward a better future ; and yet, cruelly warned by the past, she feared to yield too readily to a mere illusion, for she remembered the notorious fact that the prince had really appeared in public with this girl. But now that Mademoiselle de Cardoville could fully appreciate what she was, she found the conduct of the prince only the more incom-

prehensible. And how can we judge soundly and surely of that which is enveloped in mystery? And then a secret presentiment told her that it would, perhaps, be beside the couch of the poor seamstress, whom she had just saved from death, that, by a providential coincidence, she would learn the secret on which depended the happiness of her life.

The emotions which agitated the heart of Adrienne became so violent that her fine face was flushed with a bright red, her bosom heaved, and her large black eyes, lately dimmed by sadness, once more shone with a mild radiance. She waited with inexpressible impatience for what was to follow. In the interview with which Rose-Pompon had threatened her, and which a few minutes before Adrienne would have declined with all the dignity of legitimate indignation, she now hoped to find the explanation of a mystery which it was of such importance for her to clear up.

After once more tenderly embracing Mother Bunch, Rose-Pompon got up from the ground, and, turning toward Adrienne, eyed her from head to foot with the utmost coolness, and said to her, in a somewhat impertinent tone :

“It is now our turn, *madame*,”—the word “*madame*” still pronounced with the accent before described—“we have a little matter to settle together.”

“I am at your order,” answered Adrienne, with much mildness and simplicity.

At sight of the triumphant and decisive air of Rose-Pompon, and on hearing her challenge to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, the worthy Agricola, after exchanging a few words with Mother Bunch, opened his eyes and ears very wide, and remained staring in amazement at the effrontery of the grisette; then, advancing toward her, he whispered, as he plucked her by the sleeve :

“I say, are you mad? Do you know to whom you speak?”

“Well! what then? Is not one pretty woman worth another? I say that for the lady. She will not eat me, I suppose,” replied Rose-Pompon aloud, and with an air of defiance. “I have to talk with madame, here. I am sure she knows why and wherefore. If not, I will tell her; it will not take me long.”

Adrienne, who feared some ridiculous exposure on the subject of Djalma in the presence of Agricola, made a sign to the latter, and thus answered the grisette :

“I am ready to hear you, miss, but not in this place. You will understand why.”

“Very well, madame. I have my key. You can come to my apart-

ments" — the last word pronounced with an air of ostentatious importance.

"Let us go then to your apartments, since you will do me the honor to receive me there," answered Mademoiselle de Cardoville in her mild, sweet voice, and with a slight inclination of the head, so full of exquisite politeness that Rose-Pompon was daunted, notwithstanding all her effrontery.

"What, mademoiselle!" said Agricola to Adrienne; "you are good enough —"

"M. Agricola," said Mademoiselle de Cardoville, interrupting him, "please to remain with our poor friend; I shall soon be back."

Then, approaching Mother Bunch, who shared in Agricola's astonishment, she said to her:

"Excuse me for leaving you a few seconds. Only regain a little strength, and, when I return, I will take you home with me, dear sister."

Then, turning toward Rose-Pompon, who was more and more surprised at hearing so fine a lady call the workgirl her sister, she added:

"I am ready whenever you please, mademoiselle."

"Beg pardon, madame, if I go first to show you the way, but it's a regular breakneck sort of a place," answered Rose-Pompon, pressing her elbows to her sides, and screwing up her lips, to prove that she was no stranger to polite manners and fine language.

And the two rivals quitted the garret together, leaving Agricola alone with Mother Bunch.

Luckily, the disfigured remains of the Bacchanal Queen had been carried into Mother Arsène's subterraneous shop, so that the crowd of spectators, always attracted by any fatal event, had assembled in front of the house; and Rose-Pompon, meeting no one in the little court she had to traverse with Adrienne, continued in ignorance of the tragical death of her old friend Cephyse.

In a few moments the grisette and Mademoiselle de Cardoville had reached Philemon's apartment. This singular abode remained in the same state of picturesque disorder in which Rose-Pompon had left it when Nini Moulin came to fetch her to act the heroine of a mysterious adventure.

Adrienne, completely ignorant of the eccentric modes of life of students and their companions, could not, in spite of the thoughts which occupied her mind, forbear examining, with a mixture of surprise and curiosity, this strange and grotesque chaos, composed of the most dissimilar objects — disguises for masked balls, skulls with pipes in their mouths, odd boots standing on book-shelves, monstrous bottles, women's

clothes, ends of tobacco-pipes, etc., etc. To the first astonishment of Adrienne succeeded an impression of painful repugnance. The young lady felt herself uneasy and out of place in this abode, not of poverty, but disorder; while, on the contrary, the sewing-girl's miserable garret had caused her no such feeling.

Rose-Pompon, notwithstanding all her airs, was considerably troubled when she found herself alone with Mademoiselle de Cardoville; the rare beauty of the young patrician, her fashionable look, the elegance of her manners, the style, both dignified and affable, with which she had answered the impertinent addresses of the grisette, began to have their effect upon the latter, who, being moreover a good-natured girl, had been touched at hearing Mademoiselle de Cardoville call the hunchback "friend and sister." Without knowing exactly who Adrienne was, Rose-Pompon was not ignorant that she belonged to the richest and highest class of society; she felt already some remorse at having attacked her so cavalierly; and her intentions, at first very hostile with regard to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, were gradually much modified. Yet, being very obstinate, and not wishing to appear to submit to an influence that offended her pride, Rose-Pompon endeavored to recover her assurance; and, having bolted the door, she said to Adrienne:

"Pray do me the favor to sit down, madame"—still with the intention of showing that she was no stranger to refined manners and conversation.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville was about mechanically to take a chair, when Rose-Pompon, worthy to practice those ancient virtues of hospitality which regarded even an enemy as sacred in the person of a guest, cried out hastily:

"Don't take that chair, madame; it wants a leg."

Adrienne laid her hand on another chair.

"Nor that either; the back is quite loose," again exclaimed Rose-Pompon. And she spoke the truth, for the chair-back, which was made in the form of a lyre, remained in the hands of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who said, as she replaced it discreetly in its former position:

"I think, mademoiselle, that we can very well talk standing."

"As you please, madame," replied Rose-Pompon, steadying herself the more bravely the more uneasy she felt. And the interview of the lady and the grisette began in this fashion.

CHAPTER XXIV

THE INTERVIEW



AFTER a minute's hesitation, Rose-Pompon said to Adrienne, whose heart was beating violently:

"I will tell you directly, madame, what I have on my mind. I should not have gone out of my way to seek you, but, as I happen to fall in with you, it is very natural I should take advantage of it."

"But," said Adrienne mildly, "may I at least know the subject of the conversation we are to have together?"

"Yes, madame," replied Rose-Pompon, affecting an air of still more decided confidence; "first of all, you must not suppose I am unhappy, or going to make a scene of jealousy, or cry like a forsaken damsel. Do not flatter yourself! Thank heaven, I have no reason to complain of Prince Charming—that is the pet name I gave him—on the contrary, he has made me very happy. If I left him, it was against his will, and because I chose."

So saying, Rose-Pompon, whose heart was swelling in spite of her fine airs, could not repress a sigh.

"Yes, madame," she resumed, "I left him because I chose—for he quite doted on me. If I had liked, he would have married me—yes, madame, married me—so much the worse, if that gives you pain. Though, when I say 'so much the worse,' it is true that I meant to pain you. To be sure I did—but then, just now when I saw you so kind to poor Mother Bunch, though I was certainly in the right, still I felt something. However, to cut matters short, it is clear that I detest you, and that you deserve it," added Rose-Pompon, stamping her foot.

From all this it resulted, even for a person much less sagacious than Adrienne, and much less interested in discovering the truth, that Rose-Pompon, notwithstanding her triumphant airs in speaking of him whom she represented as so much attached to her, and even anxious to wed her, was in reality completely disappointed, and was now taking refuge

in a deliberate falsehood. It was evident that she was not loved, and that nothing but violent jealousy had induced her to desire this interview with Mademoiselle de Cardoville, in order to make what is vulgarly called a scene, considering Adrienne (the reason will be explained presently) as her successful rival. But Rose-Pompon, having recovered her good nature, found it very difficult to continue the scene in question, particularly as, for many reasons, she felt overawed by Adrienne.

Though she had expected, if not the singular speech of the grisette, at least something of the same result—for she felt it was impossible that the prince could entertain a serious attachment for this girl—Mademoiselle de Cardoville was at first delighted to hear the confirmation of her hopes from the lips of her rival; but suddenly these hopes were succeeded by a cruel apprehension, which we will endeavor to explain.

What Adrienne had just heard ought to have satisfied her completely. Sure that the heart of Djahna had never ceased to belong to her, she ought, according to the customs and opinions of the world, to have cared little if, in the effervescence of an ardent youth, he had chanced to yield to some ephemeral caprice for this creature, who was, after all, very pretty and desirable—the more especially as he had now repaired his error by separating from her.

Notwithstanding these good reasons, such an error of the senses would not have been pardoned by Adrienne. She did not understand that complete separation of the body and soul that would make the one exempt from the stains of the other. She did not think it a matter of indifference to toy with one woman while you were thinking of another. Her young, chaste, passionate love demanded an absolute fealty—a fealty as just in the eyes of heaven and nature as it may be ridiculous and foolish in the eyes of man. For the very reason that she cherished a refined religion of the senses, and revered it as an adorable and divine manifestation, Adrienne had all sorts of delicate scruples and nice repugnances, unknown to the austere spirituality of those ascetic prudes who despise vile matter too much to take notice of its errors, and allow it to grovel in filth, to show the contempt in which they hold it.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville was not one of those wonderfully modest creatures who would die of confusion rather than say plainly that they wished for a young and handsome husband, at once ardent and pure. It is true that they generally marry old, ugly, and corrupted men, and make up for it by taking two or three lovers six months after. But Adrienne felt instinctively how much of virginal and celestial freshness there is in the equal innocence of two loving and passionate

beings—what guarantees for the future in the remembrance which a man preserves of his first love!

We say, then, that Adrienne was only half-satisfied, though convinced by the vexation of Rose-Pompon that Djalma had never entertained a serious attachment for the grisette.

The grisette had ended her oration with the expression of flagrant hostility—

“Madame, I detest you!”

“And why do you detest me?” said Adrienne mildly.

“Oh! bless me, madame!” replied the latter, forgetting altogether her assumption of triumph, and yielding to the natural sincerity of her character; “pretend that you don’t know why I detest you! Oh, yes! people go and pick bouquets from the jaws of a panther for people that they care nothing about, don’t they? And if it was only that!” added Rose-Pompon, who was gradually getting animated, and whose pretty face, at first contracted into a sullen pout, now assumed an expression of real and yet half-comic sorrow.

“And if it was only the nosegay!” resumed she. “Though it gave me a dreadful turn to see Prince Charming leap like a kid upon the stage, I might have said to myself: ‘Pooh! these Indians have their own way of showing politeness. Here, a lady drops her nosegay, and a gentleman picks it up and gives it to her; but in India it is quite another thing; the man picks up the nosegay and does not return it to the woman—he only kills a panther before her eyes.’ Those are good manners in that country, I suppose; but what cannot be good manners anywhere is to treat a woman as I have been treated. And all thanks to you, madame!”

These complaints of Rose-Pompon, at once bitter and laughable, did not at all agree with what she had previously stated as to Djalma’s passionate love for her; but Adrienne took care not to point out this contradiction, and said to her mildly:

“You must be mistaken when you suppose that I had anything to do with your troubles. But, in any case, I regret sincerely that you should have been ill-treated by any one.”

“If you think I have been beaten, you are quite wrong,” exclaimed Rose-Pompon. “Ah! well, I am sure! No, it is not that. But I am certain that had it not been for you, Prince Charming would have got to love me a little. I am worthy the trouble, after all; and then there are different sorts of love; I am not so very particular—not even so much as that,” added Rose-Pompon, snapping her fingers.

“Ah!” she continued, “when Nini Moulin came to fetch me, and brought me jewels and laces to persuade me to go with him, he was quite right in saying there was no harm in his offers.”

"Nini Moulin?" asked Mademoiselle de Cardoville, becoming more and more interested; "who is this Nini Moulin?"

"A religious writer," answered Rose-Pompon, pouting; "the right-



hand man of a lot of old sacristans, whose money he takes on pretense of writing about morality and religion. A fine morality it is!"

At these words — "*a religious writer*" — "*sacristans*" — Adrienne instantly divined some new plot of Rodin or Father d'Aigrigny, of

which she and Djalma were to have been the victims. She began vaguely to perceive the real state of the case, as she resumed :

“But under what pretense could this man take you away with him?”

“He came to fetch me, and said I need not fear for my virtue, and was only to make myself look pretty. So I said to myself: ‘Philemon’s out of town, and it’s very dull here all alone. This seems a droll affair; what can I risk by it?’ Alas! I didn’t know what I risked,” added Rose-Pompon with a sigh. “Well! Nini Moulin takes me away in a fine carriage. We stop at the Place du Palais-Royal. A sullen-looking man, with a yellow face, gets up in the room of Nini Moulin and takes me to the house of Prince Charming. When I saw him — la! he was handsome, so very handsome, that I was quite dizzy-like; and he had such a kind, noble air, that I said to myself: ‘Well! there will be some credit if I remain a good girl now!’ I did not know what a true word I was speaking. I have been good; oh! worse than good.”

“What! do you regret having been so virtuous?”

“Why, you see, I regret, at least, that I have not had the pleasure of refusing. But how can you refuse, when nothing is asked — when you are not even thought worth one little loving word?”

“But allow me to observe to you that the indifference of which you complain does not seem to have prevented your making a long stay in the house in question.”

“How should I know why the prince kept me there, or took me out riding with him, or to the play? Perhaps it is the fashion in his savage country to have a pretty girl by your side, and to pay no attention to her at all!”

“But why, then, did you remain?”

“Why did I remain?” said Rose-Pompon, stamping her foot with vexation. “I remained because, without knowing how it happened, I began to get very fond of Prince Charming; and what is queer enough, I, who am as gay as a lark, loved him because he was so sorrowful, which shows that it was a serious matter. At last, one day, I could hold out no longer. I said: ‘Never mind; I don’t care for the consequences. Philemon, I am sure, is having his fun in the country.’ That set my mind at ease. So one morning I dress myself in my best, all very pretty, look in my glass, and say: ‘Well, that will do; he can’t stand that!’ and, going to his room, I tell him all that passes through my head; I laugh, I cry; at last I tell him that I adore him. What do you think he answers, in his mild voice, and as cold as a piece of marble? Why, ‘Poor child — poor child — poor child!’” added Rose-Pompon with indignation; “neither more nor less than if I had come to complain to him of the toothache. But the worst of it is that I am

sure, if he were not in love elsewhere, he would be all fire and gunpowder. Only now he is so sad, so dejected!"

Then, pausing a moment, Rose-Pompon added:

"No, I will not tell you that; you would be too pleased."

But after another pause, she continued:

"Well, never mind; I will tell you, though"; and this singular girl looked at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with a mixture of sympathy and deference. "Why should I keep it from you? I began by riding the high horse, and saying that the prince wished to marry me; and I finish by confessing that he almost turned me out. Well, it's not my fault; when I try to fib, I am sure to get confused. So, madame, this is the plain truth: When I met you at poor Mother Bunch's, I was at first as angry as a little turkey-cock; but when I heard you, that are such a fine great lady, speak so kindly to the poor girl, and treat her as your sister, do what I would, my anger began to go away. Since we have been here, I have done my utmost to get it up again; but I find it impossible, and the more I see the difference between us, the more I perceive that Prince Charming was right in thinking so much of you. For you must know, madame, that he is over head and ears in love with you. I don't say so merely because he killed the panther for you at the Porte Saint-Martin; but if you knew all the tricks he played with your bouquet, and how he will sit up all night weeping in that room where he saw you for the first time—and then your portrait, that he has drawn upon glass, after the fashion of his country, and so many other things—the fact is, that I, who was fond of him, and saw all this, was at first in a great rage; but afterward it was so touching that it brought tears into my eyes. Yes, madame, just as it does now, when I merely think of the poor prince. Oh, madame!" added Rose-Pompon, her eyes swimming in tears, and with such an expression of sincere interest that Adrienne was much moved by it; "oh, madame, you look so mild and good that you will not make this poor prince miserable. Pray love him a little bit; what can it matter to you?"

So saying, Rose-Pompon, with a perfectly simple though too familiar gesture, took hold of Adrienne's hand, as if to enforce her request.

It had required great self-command in Mademoiselle de Cardoville to repress the rush of joy that was mounting from her heart to her lips, to check the torrent of questions which she burned to address to Rose-Pompon, and to restrain the sweet tears of happiness that for some seconds had trembled in her eyes; and, strangely enough, when Rose-Pompon took her hand, Adrienne, instead of withdrawing it, pressed the offered hand almost affectionately, and led her toward the window, as if to examine her sweet face more attentively.

On entering the room, the grisette had thrown her bonnet and shawl down upon the bed, so that Adrienne could admire the thick and silky masses of light hair that crowned the fresh face of the charming girl, with its firm, rosy cheeks, its mouth as red as a cherry, and its large, blue laughing eyes; and, thanks to the somewhat scanty dress of Rose-Pompon, Adrienne could fully appreciate the various graces of her nymph-like figure.

Strange as it may appear, Adrienne was delighted at finding the girl still prettier than she had at first imagined. The stoical indifference of Djalma to so attractive a creature was the best proof of the sincerity of the passion by which he was actuated.

Having taken the hand of Adrienne, Rose-Pompon was herself confused and surprised at the kindness with which Mademoiselle de Cardoville permitted this familiarity. Emboldened by this indulgence, and by the silence of Adrienne, who for some moments had been contemplating her with almost grateful benevolence, the grisette resumed:

"Oh, you will not refuse, madame? You will take pity on this poor prince?"

We cannot tell how Adrienne would have answered this indiscreet question of Rose-Pompon, for suddenly a loud, wild, shrill, piercing sound, evidently intended to imitate the crowing of a cock, was heard close to the door of the room.

Adrienne started in alarm; but the countenance of Rose-Pompon, just now so sad, brightened up joyously at this signal, and clapping her hands, she exclaimed, "It is Philemon!"

"What—who?" said Adrienne hastily.

"My lover; oh, the monster! he must have come upstairs on tiptoe, to take me by surprise with his crowing. Just like him!"

A second cock-a-doodle-do, still louder than the first, was heard close to the door.

"What a stupid, droll creature it is! Always the same joke, and yet it always amuses me," said Rose-Pompon.

And drying her tears with the back of her hand, she began to laugh like one bewitched at Philemon's jest, which, though well known to her, always seemed new and agreeable.

"Do not open the door," whispered Adrienne, much embarrassed; "do not answer, I beg of you."

"Though the door is bolted, the key is on the outside; Philemon can see that there is some one at home."

"No matter—do not let him in."

"But, madame, he lives here; the room belongs to him."

In fact, Philemon, probably growing tired of the little effect pro-

duced by his two ornithological imitations, turned the key in the lock, and finding himself unable to open the door, said in a deep bass voice:

“What, dearest puss, have you shut yourself in? Are you praying Saint-Flambard for the return of Philly?”

Adrienne, not wishing to increase, by prolonging it, the awkwardness of this ridiculous situation, went straight to the door and opened it, to the great surprise of Philemon, who recoiled two or three steps. Notwithstanding the annoyance of this incident, Mademoiselle de Cardoville could not help smiling at sight of Rose-Pompon’s lover, and of the articles he carried in his hand or under his arm.

Philemon was a tall fellow, with dark hair and a very fresh color, and, being just arrived from a journey, he wore a white Basque cap; his thick, black beard flowed down on his sky-blue waistcoat; and a short olive-colored velvet shooting-coat, with extravagantly large plaid trousers, completed his costume. As for the accessories, which had provoked a smile from Adrienne, they consisted: first, of a portmanteau tucked under his arm, with the head and neck of a goose protruding from it; secondly, of a cage held in his hand, with an enormous white rabbit all alive within it.

“Oh! the darling white rabbit! what pretty red eyes!”

Such, it must be confessed, was the first exclamation of Rose-Pompon, though Philemon, to whom it was not addressed, had returned after a long absence; but the student, far from being shocked at seeing himself thus sacrificed to his long-eared companion, smiled complacently, rejoicing at the success of his attempt to please his mistress.

All this passed very rapidly.

While Rose-Pompon, kneeling before the cage, was still occupied with her admiration of the rabbit, Philemon, struck with the lofty air of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, raised his hand to his cap, and bowed respectfully as he made way for her to pass. Adrienne returned his salutation with politeness, full of grace and dignity, and, lightly descending the stairs, soon disappeared.

Dazzled by her beauty, as well as impressed with her noble and lofty bearing, and curious to know how in the world Rose-Pompon had fallen in with such an acquaintance, Philemon said to her, in his amorous jargon:

“Dearest puss! tell her Philly who is that fine lady?”

“One of my school-fellows, you great satyr!” said Rose-Pompon, still playing with the rabbit.

Then, glancing at a box, which Philemon deposited close to the cage and the portmanteau, she added:

“I’ll wager anything you have brought me some more preserves!”

"Philly has brought something better to his dear puss," said the student, imprinting two vigorous kisses on the rosy cheeks of Rose-Pompon, who had at length consented to stand up; "Philly has brought her his heart."

"Fudge!" said the grisette, delicately placing the thumb of her left hand on the tip of her nose and opening the fingers, which she slightly moved to and fro.

Philemon answered this provocation by putting his arm round her waist; and then the happy pair shut their door.

CHAPTER XXV

SOOTHING WORDS

DURING the interview of Adrienne with Rose-Pompon a touching scene took place between Agricola and Mother Bunch, who had been much surprised at Mademoiselle de Cardoville's condescension with regard to the grisette.

Immediately after the departure of Adrienne Agricola had knelt down beside Mother Bunch and said to her with profound emotion :

"We are alone, and I can at length tell you what weighs upon my heart. This act is too cruel—to die of misery and despair, and not to send to me for assistance!"

"Listen to me, Agricola ——"

"No, there is no excuse for this. What! we called each other by the names of brother and sister, and for fifteen years gave every proof of sincere affection; and, when the day of misfortune comes, you quit life without caring for those you must leave behind—without considering that to kill yourself is to tell them they are indifferent to you!"

"Forgive me, Agricola! it is true. I had never thought of that," said the workgirl, casting down her eyes; "but poverty—want of work——"

"Misery! want of work! and was I not here?"

"And despair!"

"But why despair? This generous young lady had received you in her house; she knew your worth and treated you as her friend, and just at the moment when you had every chance of happiness, you leave the house abruptly, and we remain in the most horrible anxiety on your account."

"I feared—to be—to be a burden to my benefactress," stammered she.

"You a burden to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, that is so rich and good!"

"I feared to be indiscreet," said the sewing-girl, more and more embarrassed.

Instead of answering his adopted sister, Agricola remained silent,

and contemplated her for some moments with an undefinable expression; then he exclaimed suddenly, as if replying to a question put by himself:

"She will forgive me for disobeying her. I am sure of it."

He next turned toward Mother Bunch, who was looking at him in astonishment, and said to her in a voice of emotion:

"I am too frank to keep up this deception. I am reproaching you—blaming you—and my thoughts are quite different."

"How so, Agricola?"

"My heart aches when I think of the evil I have done you."

"I do not understand you, my friend; you have never done me any evil."

"What! never? even in little things? when, for instance, yielding to a detestable habit, I, who loved and respected you as my sister, insulted you a hundred times a day?"

"Insulted me!"

"Yes—when I gave you an odious and ridiculous nickname, instead of calling you properly."

At these words Mother Bunch looked at the smith in the utmost alarm, trembling lest he had discovered her painful secret, notwithstanding the assurance she had received from Mademoiselle de Cardoville. Yet she calmed herself a little when she reflected that Agricola might of himself have thought of the humiliation inflicted on her by calling her Mother Bunch, and she answered him with a forced smile:

"Can you be grieved at so small a thing? It was a habit, Agricola, from childhood. When did your good and affectionate mother, who nevertheless loved me as her daughter, ever call me anything else?"

"And did my mother consult you about my marriage, speak to you of the rare beauty of my bride, beg you to come and see her, and study her character, in the hope that the instinct of your affection for me would warn you—if I made a bad choice? Did my mother have this cruelty?—No; it was I who thus pierced your heart!"

The fears of the hearer were again aroused; there could be but little doubt that Agricola knew her secret. She felt herself sinking with confusion; yet, making a last effort not to believe the discovery, she murmured in a feeble voice:

"True, Agricola! It was not your mother, but yourself who made me that request—and I was grateful to you for such a mark of confidence."

"Grateful, my poor girl!" cried the smith, while his eyes filled with tears; "no, it is not true. I pained you fearfully; I was merciless—heaven knows, without being aware of it!"

"But," said the other, in a voice now almost unintelligible, "what makes you think so?"

"Your love for me!" cried the smith, trembling with emotion, as he clasped Mother Bunch in a brotherly embrace.

"Oh, heaven!" murmured the unfortunate creature, as she covered her face with her hands, "he knows all."



"Yes, I know all," resumed Agricola, with an expression of ineffable tenderness and respect; "yes, I know all, and I will not have you blush for a sentiment which honors me, and of which I feel so justly proud.

Yes, I know all; and I say to myself with joy and pride, that the best, the most noble heart in the world is mine — will be mine always. Come, Magdalen; let us leave shame to evil passions. Raise your eyes and look at me! You know, if my countenance was ever false — if it ever reflected a feigned emotion. Then look and tell me if you cannot read in my features how proud I am, Magdalen, how justly proud of your love!”

Overwhelmed with grief and confusion, Mother Bunch had not dared to look on Agricola; but his words expressed so deep a conviction, the tones of his voice revealed so tender an emotion, that the poor creature felt her shame gradually diminish, particularly when Agricola added, with rising animation:

“Be satisfied, my sweet, my noble Magdalen; I will be worthy of this love. Believe me, it shall yet cause you as much happiness as it has occasioned tears. Why should this love be a motive for estrangement, confusion, fear? For what is love, in the sense in which it is held by your generous heart? Is it not a continual exchange of devotion, tenderness, esteem, of mutual and blind confidence? Why, Magdalen! we may have all this for one another — devotion, tenderness, confidence — even more than in times past; for, on a thousand occasions, your secret inspired you with fear and suspicion — while, for the future, on the contrary, you will see me take such delight in the place I fill in your good and valiant heart that you will be happy in the happiness you bestow. What I have just said may seem very selfish and conceited; so much the worse! I do not know how to lie.”

The longer the smith spoke, the less troubled became Mother Bunch. What she had above all feared in the discovery of her secret was to see it received with raillery, contempt, or humiliating compassion; far from this, joy and happiness were distinctly visible on the manly and honest face of Agricola. The hunchback knew him incapable of deception; therefore she exclaimed, this time without shame or confusion, but rather with a sort of pride:

“Every sincere and pure passion is so far good and consoling as to end by deserving interest and sympathy, when it has triumphed over its first excess! It is alike honorable to the heart which feels and that which inspires it! Thanks to you, Agricola — thanks to the kind words which have raised me in my own esteem — I feel that, instead of blushing, I ought to be proud of this love. My benefactress is right — you are right; why should I be ashamed of it? Is it not a true and sacred love? To be near you, to love you, to tell you so, to prove it by constant devotion, what did I ever desire more? And yet shame and fear, joined with that dizziness of the brain which extreme misery pro-

duces, drove me to suicide! But then some allowance must be made for the suspicions of a poor creature who has been the subject of ridicule from her cradle. So my secret was to die with me, unless some unforeseen accident should reveal it to you; and, in that case, you are right—sure of myself, sure of you, I ought to have feared nothing. But I may claim some indulgence; mistrust, cruel mistrust of one's self makes one doubt others also. Let us forget all that. Agricola, my generous brother, I will say to you as you said to me just now, 'Look at me; you know my countenance cannot lie. Look at me; see if I shun your gaze; see if ever in my life I looked so happy'—and yet, even now, I was about to die!"

She spoke the truth. Agricola himself could not have hoped so prompt an effect from his words. In spite of the deep traces which misery, grief, and sickness had imprinted on the girl's features, they now shone with radiant happiness and serenity, while her blue eyes, gentle and pure as her soul, were fixed, without embarrassment, on those of Agricola.

"Oh! thanks, thanks!" cried the smith, in a rapture of delight; "when I see you so calm, and so happy, Magdalen, I am indeed grateful."

"Yes, I am calm, I am happy," replied she; "and happy I shall be, for I can now tell you my most secret thoughts. Yes, happy; for this day, which began so fatally, ends like a divine dream. Far from being afraid, I now look at you with hope and joy. I have again found my generous benefactress, and I am tranquil as to the fate of my poor sister. Oh! shall we not soon see her? I should like her to take part in this happiness."

She seemed so happy that the smith did not dare to inform her of the death of Cephyse, and reserved himself to communicate the same at a more fitting opportunity. Therefore he answered:

"Cephyse being the stronger, has been the more shaken; it will not be prudent, I am told, to see her to-day."

"I will wait then. I can repress my impatience, I have so much to say to you."

"Dear, gentle Magdalen!"

"Oh, my friend!" cried the girl, interrupting Agricola, with tears of joy; "I cannot tell you what I feel, when I hear you call me Magdalen. It is so sweet, so soothing, that my heart expands with delight."

"Poor girl! how dreadfully she must have suffered!" cried the smith, with inexpressible emotion, "when she displays so much happiness, so much gratitude, at being called by her own poor name!"

"But consider, my friend; that word in your mouth contains a new life for me. If you only knew what hopes, what pleasures, I can now

see gleaming in the future ! If you knew all the cherished longings of my tenderness !—Your wife, the charming Angela, with her angel face and angel soul—oh ! in my turn, I can say to you, ‘Look at me, and see how sweet that name is to my lips and heart !’ Yes, your charming, your good Angela will call me Magdalen—and your children, Agricola, your children—dear little creatures !—to them also shall I be Magdalen—their good Magdalen ; and the love I shall bear them will make them mine as well as their mother’s ; and I shall have my part in every maternal care ; and they will belong to us three ; will they not, Agricola ? Oh ! let me, let me weep ! These tears without bitterness do me so much good ; they are tears that need not be concealed. Thank heaven ! thank you, my friend ! those other tears are, I trust, dried forever !”

For some seconds, this affecting scene had been overlooked by an invisible witness. The smith and Mother Bunch had not perceived *Mademoiselle de Cardoville* standing on the threshold of the door.

As Mother Bunch had said, this day, which dawned with all under such fatal auspices, had become for all a day of ineffable felicity. *Adrienne*, too, was full of joy, for *Djalma* had been faithful to her, *Djalma* loved her with passion. The odious appearances of which she had been the dupe and victim evidently formed part of a new plot of *Rodin*, and it only remained for *Mademoiselle de Cardoville* to discover the end of these machinations.

Another joy was reserved for her. The happy are quick in detecting happiness in others, and *Adrienne* guessed, by the hunchback’s last words, that there was no longer any secret between the smith and the seamstress. She could not therefore help exclaiming, as she entered :

“Oh ! this will be the brightest day of my life, for I shall not be happy alone !”

Agricola and Mother Bunch turned round hastily.

“*Mademoiselle*,” said the smith, “in spite of the promise I made you, I could not conceal from Magdalen that I knew she loved me !”

“Now that I no longer blush for this love before *Agricola*, why should I blush for it before you, *mademoiselle*, that told me to be proud of it, because it is noble and pure ?” said Mother Bunch, to whom her happiness gave strength enough to rise, and to lean upon *Agricola*’s arm.

“It is well, my friend,” said *Adrienne*, as she threw her arms round her to support her ; “only one word, to excuse the indiscretion with which you will perhaps reproach me. If I told your secret to M. *Agricola* ——”

“Do you know why it was, Magdalen ?” cried the smith, interrupting *Adrienne*. “It was only another proof of the lady’s delicate generosity.

"I long hesitated to confide to you this secret," said she to me this morning, "but I have at length made up my mind to it. We shall probably find your adopted sister; you have been to her the best of brothers; but many times, without knowing it, you have wounded her feelings cruelly—and now that you know her secret, I trust in your kind heart to keep it faithfully, and so spare the poor child a thousand pangs—pangs the more bitter, because they come from you, and are suffered in silence. Hence, when you speak to her of your wife, your domestic happiness, take care not to gall that noble and tender heart.—Yes, Magdalen, these were the reasons that led the lady to commit what she calls an indiscretion."

"I want words to thank you now and ever," said Mother Bunch.

"See, my friend," replied Adrienne, "how often the designs of the wicked turn against themselves. They feared your devotion to me, and therefore employed that unhappy Florine to steal your journal —"

"So as to drive me from your house with shame, when I supposed my most secret thoughts an object of ridicule to all. There can be no doubt such was their plan," said Mother Bunch.

"None, my child. Well! this horrible weakness, which nearly caused your death, now turns to the confusion of the criminals. Their plot is discovered—and, luckily, many other of their designs," said Adrienne, as she thought of Rose-Pompon.

Then she resumed, with heartfelt joy :

"At last, we are again united, happier than ever, and in our very happiness we shall find new resources to combat our enemies. I say *our* enemies—for all that love me are odious to these wretches. But courage, the hour is come, and the good people will have their turn."

"Thank heaven, mademoiselle," said the smith; "for my part, I shall not be wanting in zeal. What delight to strip them of their mask."

"Let me remind you, M. Baudoin, that you have an appointment for to-morrow with M. Hardy."

"I have not forgotten it, mademoiselle, any more than the generous offers I am to convey to him."

"That is nothing. He belongs to my family. Tell him (what indeed I shall write to him this evening) that the funds necessary to reopen his factory are at his disposal; I do not say so for his sake only, but for that of a hundred families reduced to want. Beg him to quit immediately the fatal abode to which they have taken him; for a thousand reasons he should be on his guard against all that surround him."

"Be satisfied. The letter he wrote to me, in reply to the one I got secretly delivered to him, was short, affectionate, sad; but he grants

me the interview I had asked for, and I am sure I shall be able to persuade him to leave that melancholy dwelling, and perhaps to depart with me, he has always had so much confidence in my attachment."

"Well, M. Baudoin, courage!" said Adrienne, as she threw her cloak over the workgirl's shoulders, and wrapped her round with care. "Let us be gone, for it is late. As soon as we get home, I will give you a letter for M. Hardy, and to-morrow you will come and tell me the result of your visit. No, not to-morrow," she added, blushing slightly.

"Write to me to-morrow, and the day after, about twelve, come to me."

Some minutes later, the young seamstress, supported by Agricola and Adrienne, had descended the stairs of that gloomy house, and, being placed in the carriage by the side of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, she earnestly entreated to be allowed to see Cephyse; it was in vain that Agricola assured her it was impossible, and that she should see her the next day.

Thanks to the information derived from Rose-Pompon, Mademoiselle de Cardoville was reasonably suspicious of all those who surrounded Djalma, and she therefore took measures, that very evening, to have a letter delivered to the prince by what she considered a sure hand.

CHAPTER XXVI

THE TWO CARRIAGES

IT is the evening of the day on which Mademoiselle de Cardoville prevented the sewing-girl's suicide.

It strikes eleven; the night is dark; the wind blows with violence, and drives along great black clouds, which completely hide the pale luster of the moon. A hackney-coach, drawn by two broken-winded horses, ascends slowly and with difficulty the slope of the Rue Blanche, which is pretty steep near the barrier, in the part where is situated the house occupied by Djalma.

The coach stops. The coachman, cursing the length of an interminable drive "within the circuit," leading at last to this difficult ascent, turns round on his box, leans over toward the front window of the vehicle, and says in a gruff tone to the person he is driving:

"Come! are we almost there? From the Rue de Vaugirard to the Barrière Blanche is a pretty good stretch, I think, without reckoning that the night is so dark that one can hardly see two steps before one, and the street-lamps not lighted because of the moon, which doesn't shine, after all!"

"Look out for a little door with a portico, drive on about twenty yards beyond, and then stop close to the wall," answered a squeaking voice, impatiently, and with an Italian accent.

"Here is a beggarly Dutchman that will make me as savage as a bear," muttered the angry Jehu to himself. Then he added:

"Thousand thunders! I tell you that I can't see. How the devil can I find out your little door?"

"Have you no sense? Follow the wall to the right, brush against it, and you will easily find the little door. It is next to No. 50. If you do not find it you must be drunk," answered the Italian with increased bitterness.

The coachman only replied by swearing like a trooper and whipping up his jaded horses. Then, keeping close to the wall, he strained his

eyes in trying to read the numbers of the houses by the aid of his carriage-lamps.

After some moments the coach again stopped.

"I have passed No. 50, and here is a little door with a portico," said the coachman. "Is that the one?"

"Yes," said the voice. "Now go forward some twenty yards, and then stop."

"Well! I never——"

"Then get down from your box and give twice three knocks at the little door we have just passed—you understand me?—twice three knocks."

"Is that all you give me to drink?" cried the exasperated coachman.

"When you have taken me back to the Faubourg Saint-Germain, where I live, you shall have something handsome if you do but manage matters well."

"Ha! now the Faubourg Saint-Germain! Only that little bit of distance!" said the driver, with repressed rage. "And I, who have winded my horses, wanted to be on the boulevard by the time the play was out. Well, I'm blowed!"

Then, putting a good face on his bad luck, and consoling himself with the thought of the promised drink-money, he resumed:

"I am to give twice three knocks at the little door?"

"Yes; three knocks first—then a pause—then three other knocks. Do you understand?"

"What next?"

"Tell the person who comes that he is waited for, and bring him here to the coach."

"The devil burn you!" said the coachman to himself, as he turned round on the box and whipped up his horses, adding: "this crusty old Dutchman has something to do with Freemasons, or, perhaps, smugglers, seeing we are so near the gates. He deserves my giving him in charge for bringing me all the way from the Rue de Vaugirard."

At twenty steps beyond the little door the coach again stopped, and the coachman descended from his box to execute the orders he had received. Going to the little door he knocked three times; then paused as he had been desired, and then knocked three times more.

The clouds, which had hitherto been so thick as entirely to conceal the disk of the moon, just then withdrew sufficiently to afford a glimmering light, so that when the door opened at the signal the coachman saw a middle-sized person issue from it, wrapped in a cloak and wearing a colored cap.



AGRICOLA AND MOTHER BUNCH.

This man carefully locked the door, and then advanced two steps into the street.

"They are waiting for you," said the coachman; "I am to take you along with me to the coach."

Preceding the man with the cloak, who only answered him by a nod, he led him to the coach-door, which he was about to open and to let down the step, when the voice exclaimed from the inside:

"It is not necessary. The gentleman may talk to me through the window. I will call you when it is time to start."

"Which means that I shall be kept here long enough to send you to all the devils!" murmured the driver. "However, I may as well walk about, just to stretch my legs."

So saying, he began to walk up and down by the side of the wall in which was the little door. Presently he heard the distant sound of wheels, which soon came nearer and nearer, and a carriage, rapidly ascending the slope, stopped on the other side of the little garden-door.

"Come, I say! a private carriage!" said the coachman. "Good horses those, to come up the Rue Blanche at a trot."

The coachman was just making this observation, when, by favor of a momentary gleam of light, he saw a man step from the carriage, advance rapidly to the little door, open it, and go in, closing it after him.

"It gets thicker and thicker!" said the coachman. "One comes out, and the other goes in."

So saying, he walked up to the carriage. It was splendidly harnessed, and drawn by two handsome and vigorous horses. The driver sat motionless, in his great box-coat, with the handle of his whip resting on his right knee.

"Here's weather to drive about in, with such tidy horses as yours, comrade!" said the humble hackney-coachman to this fashionable Automedon, who remained mute and impassible, without even appearing to know that he was spoken to.

"He doesn't understand French—he's an Englishman. One could tell that by his horses," said the coachman, putting this interpretation on the silence of his brother whip. Then perceiving a tall footman at a little distance, dressed in a long gray livery coat, with blue collar and silver buttons, the coachman addressed himself to him, by way of compensation, but without much varying his phrase: "Here's nice weather to stand about in, comrade!"

On the part of the footman, he was met with the same imperturbable silence.

"They're both Englishmen," resumed the coachman, philosophically;

and, though somewhat astonished at the incident of the little door, he recommenced his walk in the direction of his own vehicle.

While these facts were passing, the man in the cloak and the man with the Italian accent continued their conversation, the one still in the coach, and the other leaning with his hand on the door. It had already lasted for some time, and was carried on in Italian. They were evidently talking of some absent person, as will appear from the following:

"So," said the voice from the coach, "that is agreed to?"

"Yes, my lord," answered the man in the cloak; "but only in case the eagle should become a serpent."

"And in the contrary event, you will receive the other half of the ivory crucifix I gave you."

"I shall know what it means, my lord."

"Continue to merit and preserve his confidence."

"I will merit and preserve it, my lord, because I admire and respect this man, who is stronger than the strongest, by craft, and courage, and will. I have knelt before him with humility, as I would kneel before one of the three black idols that stand between Bowanee and her worshipers; for his religion, like mine, teaches to change life into nothingness."

"Humph!" said the voice, in a tone of some embarrassment; "these comparisons are useless and inaccurate. Only think of obeying him, without explaining your obedience."

"Let him speak, and I will perform his will! I am in his hands *like a corpse*, as he himself expresses it. He has seen, he sees every day, my devotion to his interests with regard to Prince Djahna. He has only to say, 'Kill him!'—and this son of a king——"

"For heaven's sake, do not have such ideas!" cried the voice, interrupting the man in the cloak. "Thank heaven, you will never be asked for such proofs of your submission."

"What I am ordered, I do. Bowanee sees me."

"I do not doubt your zeal. I know that you are a loving and intelligent barrier placed between the prince and many guilty interests; and it is because I have heard of that zeal, of your skill in circumventing this young Indian, and, above all, of the motives of your blind devotion, that I have wished to inform you of everything. You are the fanatical worshiper of him you serve. That is well; man should be the obedient slave of the god he chooses for himself."

"Yes, my lord; so long as the god remains a god."

"We understand each other perfectly. As for your recompense, you know what I have promised."

"My lord, I have my reward already."

"How so?"

"I know what I know."

"Very well. Then as for secrecy——"

"You have securities, my lord."

"Yes—and sufficient ones."

"The interest of the cause I serve, my lord, would alone be enough to secure my zeal and discretion."

"True; you are a man of firm and ardent convictions."

"I strive to be so, my lord."

"And, after all, a very religious man in your way. It is very praiseworthy, in these irreligious times, to have any views at all on such matters, particularly when those views will just enable me to count upon your aid."

"You may count upon it, my lord, for the same reason that the intrepid hunter prefers a jackal to ten foxes, a tiger to ten jackals, a lion to ten tigers, and the welmiss to ten lions."

"What is the welmiss?"

"It is what spirit is to matter, the blade to the scabbard, the perfume to the flower, the head to the body."

"I understand. There never was a more just comparison. You are a man of sound judgment. Always recollect what you have just told me, and make yourself more and more worthy of the confidence of—your idol."

"Will he soon be in a state to hear me, my lord?"

"In two or three days at most. Yesterday a providential crisis saved his life; and he is endowed with so energetic a will that his cure will be very rapid."

"Shall you see him again to-morrow, my lord?"

"Yes, before my departure, to bid him farewell."

"Then tell him a strange circumstance, of which I have not been able to inform him, but which happened yesterday."

"What was it?"

"I had gone to the garden of the dead. I saw funerals everywhere, and lighted torches, in the midst of the black night, shining upon tombs. Bowanee smiled in her ebon sky. As I thought of that divinity of destruction, I beheld with joy the dead-cart emptied of its coffins. The immense pit yawned like the mouth of hell; corpses were heaped upon corpses, and still it yawned the same. Suddenly, by the light of a torch, I saw an old man beside me. He wept. I had seen him before. He is a Jew—the keeper of the house in the Rue Saint-François—you know what I mean."

Here the man in the cloak started.

"Yes, I know; but what is the matter? why do you stop short?"

"Because in that house there has been for a hundred and fifty years the portrait of a man whom I once met in the center of India, on the banks of the Ganges."

And the man in the cloak again paused and shuddered.

"A singular resemblance, no doubt."

"Yes, my lord, a singular resemblance — nothing more."

"But the Jew — the old Jew?"

"I am coming to that, my lord. Still weeping, he said to a grave-digger "Well! and the coffin?"

"'You were right,' answered the man; 'I found it in the second row of the other grave. It had the figure of a cross on it, formed by seven black nails. But how could you know the place and the mark?'

"'Alas! it is no matter,' replied the old Jew with bitter melancholy. 'You see that I was but too well informed on the subject. But where is the coffin?'

"'Behind the great tomb of black marble; I have hidden it there. So make haste; for, in the confusion, nothing will be noticed. You have paid me well, and I wish you to succeed in what you require.'"

"And what did the old Jew do with the coffin marked with the seven black nails?"

"Two men accompanied him, my lord, bearing a covered litter, with curtains drawn round it. He lighted a lantern, and, followed by these two men, went toward the place pointed out by the grave-digger. A stoppage, occasioned by the dead-carts, made me lose sight of the old Jew, whom I was following amongst the tombs. Afterward I was unable to find him."

"It is indeed a strange affair. What could this old Jew want with the coffin?"

"It is said, my lord, that they use dead bodies in preparing their magic charms."

"Those unbelievers are capable of anything — even of holding communication with the Enemy of mankind. However, we will look after this; the discovery may be of importance."

At this instant a clock struck twelve in the distance.

"Midnight! already?"

"Yes, my lord."

"I must be gone. Good-bye — but for the last time swear to me that, should matters so turn out, as soon as you receive the other half of the ivory crucifix I have just given you, you will keep your promise."

"I have sworn it by Bowanee, my lord."

"Do not forget that, to make all sure, the person who will deliver to you the other half of the crucifix is to say—come, what is he to say?"

"He is to say, my lord: '*There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.*'"

"Very well. Adieu! secrecy and fidelity!"

"Secrecy and fidelity, my lord," answered the man in the cloak.

Some seconds after, the hackney-coach started, carrying with it Cardinal Malipieri, one of the speakers in the above dialogue. The other, whom the reader has no doubt recognized as Faringhea, returned to the little garden-door of the house occupied by Djalma. At the moment he was putting the key into the lock, the door opened, to his great astonishment, and a man came forth. Faringhea rushed upon the unknown, seized him violently by the collar, and exclaimed: "Who are you? whence came you?"

The stranger evidently found the tone of this question anything but satisfactory; for, instead of answering, he struggled to disengage himself from Faringhea's hold, and cried out in a loud voice:

"Help! Peter!"

Instantly the carriage, which had been standing a few yards off, dashed up at full speed, and Peter, the tall footman, seizing the half-breed by the shoulders, flung him back several paces, and thus made a seasonable diversion in favor of the unknown.

"Now, sir," said the latter to Faringhea, shaking himself, and still protected by the gigantic footman, "I am in a state to answer your questions, though you certainly have a very rough way of receiving an old acquaintance. I am Dupont, ex-bailiff of the estate of Cardoville, and it was I who helped to fish you out of the water when the ship was wrecked in which you had embarked."

By the light of the carriage-lamps, indeed, the half-caste recognized the good, honest face of Dupont, formerly bailiff, and now house-steward, to Mademoiselle de Cardoville. It must not be forgotten that Dupont had been the first to write to Mademoiselle de Cardoville, to ask her to interest herself for Djalma, who was then detained at the Chateau de Cardoville by the injuries he had received during the shipwreck.

"But, sir, what is your business here? Why do you introduce yourself clandestinely into this house?" said Faringhea, in an abrupt and suspicious tone.

"I will just observe to you that there is nothing clandestine in the matter. I came here in a carriage, with servants in the livery of my excellent mistress, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, charged by her, without

any disguise or mystery, to deliver a letter to Prince Djalma, her cousin," replied Dupont with dignity.

On these words, Faringhea trembled with mute rage as he answered:

"And why, sir, come at this late hour, and introduce yourself by this little door?"

"I came at this hour, my dear sir, because such was Mademoiselle de Cardoville's command, and I entered by this little gate because there is every reason to believe that if I had gone round to the other I should not have been permitted to see the prince."

"You are mistaken, sir," replied the half-caste.

"It is possible; but as we knew that the prince usually passed a good portion of the night in the little saloon, which communicates with the greenhouse, and as Mademoiselle de Cardoville had kept a duplicate key of this door, I was pretty certain, by taking this course, to be able to deliver into the prince's own hands the letter from Mademoiselle de Cardoville, his cousin — which I have now had the honor of doing, my dear sir; and I have been deeply touched by the kindness with which the prince deigned to receive me and to remember our last interview."

"And who kept you so well informed, sir, of the prince's habits?" said Faringhea, unable to control his vexation.

"If I have been well informed as to his habits, my dear sir, I have had no such correct knowledge of yours," answered Dupont, with a mocking air; "for I assure you that I had no more notion of seeing you than you had of seeing me."

So saying, M. Dupont bowed with something like mock politeness to the half-caste, and got into the carriage, which drove off rapidly, leaving Faringhea in a state of the utmost surprise and anger.

CHAPTER XXVII

THE APPOINTMENT

THE morning after Dupont's mission to Prince Djalma, the latter was walking with hasty and impatient step up and down the little saloon, which communicated, as we already know, with the greenhouse from which Adrienne had entered when she first appeared to him. In remembrance of that day he had chosen to dress himself as on the occasion in question; he wore the same tunic of white cashmere, with a cherry-colored turban to match with his girdle; his gaiters of scarlet velvet, embroidered with silver, displayed the fine form of his leg, and terminated in small white morocco slippers, with red heels.

Happiness has so instantaneous, and, as it were, material an influence upon young, lively, and ardent natures that Djalma, dejected and despairing only the day before, was no longer like the same person. The pale, transparent gold of his complexion was no longer tarnished by a livid hue. His large eyes, of late obscured like black diamonds by a humid vapor, now shone with mild radiance in the center of their pearly setting; his lips, long pale, had recovered their natural color, which was rich and soft as the fine purple flowers of his country.

Ever and anon, pausing in his hasty walk, he stopped suddenly and drew from his bosom a little piece of paper, carefully folded, which he pressed to his lips with enthusiastic ardor. Then, unable to restrain the expression of his happiness, he uttered a full and sonorous cry of joy, and with a bound he was in front of the plate-glass which separated the saloon from the conservatory, in which he had first seen Mademoiselle de Cardoville. By a singular power of remembrance, or marvelous hallucination of a mind possessed by a fixed idea, Djalma had often seen, or fancied he saw, the adored semblance of Adrienne appear to him through this sheet of crystal. The illusion had been so complete, that, with his eyes ardently fixed on the vision he invoked, he had been able, with the aid of a pencil dipped in carmine, to trace, with

astonishing exactness, the profile of the ideal countenance which the delirium of his imagination had presented to his view. It was before these delicate lines of bright carmine that Djalma now stood in deep contemplation, after perusing and reperusing, and raising twenty times to his lips, the letter he had received the night before from the hands of Dupont.

Djalma was not alone. Faringhea watched all the movements of the prince with a subtle, attentive, and gloomy aspect. Standing respectfully in a corner of the saloon, the half-caste appeared to be occupied in unfolding and spreading out Djalma's sash, light, silky Indian web, the brown ground of which was almost entirely concealed by the exquisite gold and silver embroidery with which it was overlaid.

The countenance of the half-caste wore a dark and gloomy expression. He could not deceive himself. The letter from Mademoiselle de Cardoville, delivered by Dupont to Djalma, must have been the cause of the delight he now experienced, for, without doubt, he knew himself beloved. In that event, his obstinate silence toward Faringhea, ever since the latter had entered the saloon, greatly alarmed the half-caste, who could not tell what interpretation to put upon it.

The night before, after parting with Dupont, he had hastened, in a state of anxiety easily understood, to look for the prince, in the hope of ascertaining the effect produced by Mademoiselle de Cardoville's letter. But he found the parlor door closed, and when he knocked he received no answer from within. Then, though the night was far advanced, he had dispatched a note to Rodin, in which he informed him of Dupont's visit and its probable intention. Djalma had indeed passed the night in a tumult of happiness and hope, and a fever of impatience quite impossible to describe. Repairing to his bed-chamber only toward the morning, he had taken a few moments of repose, and had then dressed himself without assistance.

Many times, but in vain, the half-caste had discreetly knocked at the door of Djalma's apartment. It was only in the early part of the afternoon that the prince had rung the bell to order his carriage to be ready by half-past two. Faringhea having presented himself, the prince had given him the order without looking at him, as he might have done to any other of his servants. Was this suspicion, aversion, or mere absence of mind on the part of Djalma? Such were the questions which the half-caste put to himself with growing anguish; for the designs of which he was the most active and immediate instrument might all be ruined by the least suspicion in the prince.

"Oh! the hours—the hours—how slow they are!" cried the young Indian suddenly in a low and trembling voice.

"The day before yesterday, my lord, you said the hours were very long," observed Faringhea, as he drew near Djalma in order to attract his attention. Seeing that he did not succeed in this, he advanced a few steps nearer, and resumed :



"Your joy seems very great, my lord; tell the cause of it to your poor and faithful servant, that he also may rejoice with you."

If he heard the words, Djalma did not pay any attention to them.

He made no answer, and his large black eyes gazed upon vacancy. He seemed to smile admiringly on some enchanting vision, and he folded his two hands upon his bosom, in the attitude which his countrymen assume at the hour of prayer. After some instants of contemplation, he said:

“What o’clock is it?”—but he asked this question of himself, rather than of any third person.

“It will soon be two o’clock, my lord,” said Faringhea.

Having heard this answer, Djalma seated himself and hid his face in his hands, as if completely absorbed in some ineffable meditation.

Urged on by his growing anxiety, and wishing at any cost to attract the attention of Djalma, Faringhea approached still nearer to him, and, almost certain of the effect of the words he was about to utter, said to him in a slow and emphatic voice:

“My lord, I am sure that you owe the happiness which now transports you to Mademoiselle de Cardoville.”

Hardly had this name been pronounced than Djalma started from his chair, looked the half-breed full in the face, and exclaimed, as if only just aware of his presence:

“Faringhea! you here!—what is the matter?”

“Your faithful servant shares in your joy, my lord.”

“What joy?”

“That which the letter of Mademoiselle de Cardoville has occasioned, my lord.”

Djalma returned no answer, but his eyes shone with so much serene happiness that the half-caste recovered from his apprehensions. No cloud of doubt or suspicion obscured the radiant features of the prince. After a few moments of silence, Djalma fixed upon the half-caste a look half-veiled with a tear of joy, and said to him, with the expression of one whose heart overflows with love and happiness:

“Oh! such delight is good—great—like Heaven!—for it is Heaven which——”

“You deserve this happiness, my lord, after so many sufferings.”

“What sufferings?—Oh! yes. I formerly suffered at Java; but that was years ago.”

“My lord, this great good fortune does not astonish me. What have I always told you? Do not despair; feign a violent passion for some other woman, and then this proud young lady——”

At these words Djalma looked at the half-caste with so piercing a glance that the latter stopped short; but the prince said to him with affectionate goodness:

“Go on! I listen.”

Then, leaning his chin upon his hand, and his elbow on his knee, he gazed so intently on Faringhea, and yet with such unutterable mildness, that even that iron soul was touched for a moment with a slight feeling of remorse.

"I was saying, my lord," he resumed, "that by following the counsels of your faithful slave, who persuaded you to feign a passionate love for another woman, you have brought the proud *Mademoiselle de Cardoville* to come to you. Did I not tell you it would be so?"

"Yes, you did tell me so," answered Djalma, still maintaining the same position, and examining the half-caste with the same fixed and mild attention.

The surprise of Faringhea increased; generally, the prince, without treating him with the least harshness, preserved the somewhat distant and imperious manners of their common country, and he had never before spoken to him with such extreme mildness. Knowing all the evil he had done the prince, and suspicious as the wicked must ever be, the half-caste thought for a moment that his master's apparent kindness might conceal a snare. He continued, therefore, with less assurance:

"Believe me, my lord, this day, if you do but know how to profit by your advantages, will console you for all your troubles, which have indeed been great—for only yesterday, though you are generous enough to forget it, only yesterday you suffered cruelly—but you were not alone in your sufferings. This proud young lady suffered also!"

"Do you think so?" said Djalma.

"Oh! it is quite sure, my lord. What must she not have felt, when she saw you at the theater with another woman!—If she loved you only a little, she must have been deeply wounded in her self-esteem; if she loved you with passion, she must have been struck to the heart. At length, you see, wearied out with suffering, she has come to you."

"So that, anyway, she must have suffered—and that does not move your pity?" said Djalma, in a constrained but still very mild voice.

"Before thinking of others, my lord, I think of your distresses; and they touch me too nearly to leave me any pity for other woes," added Faringhea, hypocritically, so greatly had the influence of Rodin already modified the character of the Phansegar.

"It is strange!" said Djalma, speaking to himself, as he viewed the half-caste with a glance still kind, but piercing.

"What is strange, my lord?"

"Nothing. But tell me, since your advice has hitherto prospered so well, what think you of the future?"

"Of the future, my lord?"

"Yes; in an hour I shall be with *Mademoiselle de Cardoville*."

"That is a serious matter, my lord. The whole future will depend upon this interview."

"That is what I was just thinking."

"Believe me, my lord, women never love any so well as the bold man who spares them the embarrassment of a refusal."

"Explain more fully."

"Well, my lord, they despise the timid and languishing lover, who asks humbly for what he might take by force."

"But to-day I shall meet Mademoiselle de Cardoville for the first time."

"You have met her a thousand times in your dreams, my lord; and depend upon it, she has seen you also in her dreams, since she loves you. Every one of your amorous thoughts has found an echo in her heart. All your ardent adorations have been responded to by her. Love has not two languages, and, without meeting, you have said all that you had to say to each other. Now, it is for you to act as her master, and she will be yours entirely."

"It is strange—very strange!" said Djalma, a second time, without removing his eyes from Faringhea's face.

Mistaking the sense which the prince attached to these words, the half-caste resumed:

"Believe me, my lord, however strange it may appear, this is the wisest course. Remember the past. Was it by playing the part of a timid lover that you have brought to your feet this proud young lady, my lord? No, it was by pretending to despise her in favor of another woman. Therefore, let us have no weakness. The lion does not woo like the poor turtle-dove. What cares the sultan of the desert for a few plaintiff howls from the lioness, who is more pleased than angry at his rude and wild caresses? Soon submissive, fearful, and happy, she follows in the track of her master. Believe me, my lord—try everything—dare everything—and to-day you will become the adored sultan of this young lady, whose beauty all Paris admires."

After some minutes' silence, Djalma, shaking his head with an expression of tender pity, said to the half-caste, in his mild, sonorous voice:

"Why betray me thus? Why advise me thus wickedly to use violence, terror, and surprise toward an angel of purity, whom I respect as my mother? Is it not enough for you to have been so long devoted to my enemies, whose hatred has followed me from Java?"

Had Djalma sprung upon the half-caste with blood-shot eye, menacing brow, and lifted poniard, the latter would have been less surprised, and perhaps less frightened, than when he heard the prince speak of his treachery in this tone of mild reproach.

He drew back hastily, as if about to stand on his guard. But Djalma resumed, with the same gentleness:

"Fear nothing. Yesterday I should have killed you! But to-day happy love renders me too just, too merciful for that. I pity you, without any feeling of bitterness; for you must have been very unhappy, or you could not have become so wicked."

"My lord!" said the half-caste, with growing amazement.

"Yes, you must have suffered much, and met with little mercy, poor creature, to have become so merciless in your hate, and proof against the sight of a happiness like mine. When I listened to you just now, and saw the sad perseverance of your hatred, I felt the deepest commiseration for you."

"I do not know, my lord—but—" stammered the half-caste, and was unable to find words to proceed.

"Come, now; what harm have I ever done you?"

"None, my lord," answered Faringhea.

"Then why do you hate me thus? why pursue me with so much animosity? Was it not enough to give me the perfidious counsel to feign a shameful love for the young girl that was brought hither, and who quitted the house disgusted at the miserable part she was to play?"

"Your feigned love for that young girl, my lord," replied Faringhea, gradually recovering his presence of mind, "conquered the coldness of ——"

"Do not say that," resumed the prince, interrupting him with the same mildness. "If I enjoy this happiness, which makes me compassionate toward you and raises me above myself, it is because Mademoiselle de Cardoville now knows that I have never for a moment ceased to love her as she ought to be loved, with adoration and reverence. It was your intention to have parted us forever, and you had nearly succeeded."

"If you think this of me, my lord, you must look upon me as your most mortal enemy."

"Fear nothing, I tell you. I have no right to blame you. In the madness of my grief, I listened to you and followed your advice. I was not only your dupe, but your accomplice. Only confess that when you saw me at your mercy, dejected, crushed, despairing, it was cruel in you to advise the course that might have been most fatal to me."

"The ardor of my zeal may have deceived me, my lord."

"I am willing to believe it. And yet again to-day there were the same evil counsels. You had no more pity for my happiness than for my sorrow. The rapture of my heart inspires you with only one desire—that of changing this rapture into despair."

"I, my lord!"

"Yes, you. It was your intention to ruin me—to dishonor me forever in the eyes of Mademoiselle de Cardoville. Now, tell me—why this furious hate? what have I done to you?"

"You misjudge me, my lord—and——"

"Listen to me. I do not wish you to be any longer wicked and treacherous. I wish to make you good. In our country they charm serpents and tame the wildest tigers. You are a man, with a mind to reason, a heart to love, and I will tame you too by gentleness. This day has bestowed on me divine happiness; you shall have good cause to bless this day. What can I do for you? what would you have—gold? You shall have it. Do you desire more than gold? Do you desire a friend to console you for the sorrows that made you wicked, and to teach you to be good? Though a king's son, I will be that friend—in spite of the evil—ay, because of the evil you have done me. Yes; I will be your sincere friend, and it shall be my delight to say to myself: 'The day on which I learned that my angel loved me my happiness was great indeed—for in the morning I had an implacable enemy, and ere night his hatred was changed to friendship.' Believe me, Faringhea, misery makes crime, but happiness produces virtue. Be happy!"

At this moment the clock struck two.

The prince started. It was time to go on his visit to Adrienne. The handsome countenance of Djalma, doubly embellished by the mild ineffable expression with which it had been animated while he was talking to the half-caste, now seemed illumined with almost divine radiance.

Approaching Faringhea, he extended his hand with the utmost grace and courtesy, saying to him:

"Your hand!"

The half-caste, whose brow was bathed with a cold sweat, whose countenance was pale and agitated, seemed to hesitate for an instant; then, overawed, conquered, fascinated, he offered his trembling hand to the prince, who pressed it, and said to him, in their country's fashion:

"You have laid your hand honestly in a friend's; this hand shall never be closed against you. Faringhea, farewell! I now feel myself more worthy to kneel before my angel."

And Djalma went out, on his way to the appointment with Adrienne.

In spite of his ferocity, in spite of the pitiless hate he bore to the whole human race, the dark sectary of Bowance was staggered by the noble and element words of Djalma, and said to himself, with terror:

"I have taken his hand. He is now sacred for me."

Then, after a moment's silence, a thought occurred to him, and he exclaimed:

"Yes—but he will not be sacred for him who, according to the answer of last night, waits for him at the door of the house."

So saying, the half-caste hastened into the next room, which looked



upon the street, and raising a corner of the curtain, muttered anxiously to himself:

"The carriage moves off—the man approaches. Perdition! it is gone, and I see no more."

CHAPTER XXVIII

ANXIETY



Y a singular coincidence of ideas, Adrienne, like Djalma, had wished to be dressed exactly in the same costume as at their interview in the house in the Rue Blanche.

For the site of this solemn meeting, so important to her future happiness, Adrienne had chosen, with habitual tact, the grand drawing-room of the Hotel de Cardoville, in which hung many family portraits. The most apparent were those of her father and mother. The room was large and lofty, and furnished, like those which preceded it, with all the imposing splendor of the age of Louis XV. The ceiling, painted by Lebrun to represent the Triumph of Apollo, displayed his bold designing and vigorous coloring in the center of a wide cornice, magnificently carved and gilded, and supported at its angles by four large gilt figures, representing the Seasons. Huge panels, covered with crimson damask, and set in frames, served as the background to the family portraits which adorned this apartment.

It is easier to conceive than describe the thousand conflicting emotions which agitated the bosom of Mademoiselle de Cardoville as the moment approached for her interview with Djalma. Their meeting had been hitherto prevented by so many painful obstacles, and Adrienne was so well aware of the vigilant and active perfidy of her enemies, that even now she doubted of her happiness. Every instant, in spite of herself, her eyes wandered to the clock. A few minutes more and the hour of the appointment would strike. It struck at last. Every reverberation was echoed from the depth of Adrienne's heart. She considered that Djalma's modest reserve had doubtless prevented his coming before the moment fixed by herself. Far from blaming this discretion, she fully appreciated it. But, from that moment, at the least noise in the adjoining apartments, she held her breath and listened with the anxiety of expectation.

For the first few minutes which followed the hour at which she expected Djalma Mademoiselle de Cardoville felt no serious apprehen-

sion, and calmed her impatience by the notion (which appears childish enough to those who have never known the feverish agitation of waiting for a happy meeting) that perhaps the clocks in the Rue Blanche might vary a little from those in the Rue d'Anjou. But when this supposed variation, conceivable enough in itself, could no longer explain a delay of a quarter of an hour, of twenty minutes, of more, Adrienne felt her anxiety gradually increase. Two or three times the young girl rose with palpitating heart and went on tiptoe to listen at the door of the saloon. She heard nothing. The clock struck half-past three.

Unable to suppress her growing terror, and clinging to a last hope, Adrienne returned toward the fire-place and rang the bell. After which she endeavored to compose her features so as to betray no outward sign of emotion.

In a few seconds a gray-haired footman, dressed in black, opened the door and waited in respectful silence for the orders of his mistress. The latter said to him in a calm voice :

"Andrew, request Hebe to give you the smelling-bottle that I left on the chimney-piece in my room and bring it me here."

Andrew bowed; but just as he was about to withdraw to execute Adrienne's order, which was only a pretext to enable her to ask a question without appearing to attach much importance to it in her servant's eyes, already informed of the expected visit of the prince, Mademoiselle de Cardoville added with an air of indifference :

"Pray, is that clock right?"

Andrew drew out his watch and replied, as he cast his eyes upon it :

"Yes, mademoiselle. I set my watch by the Tuileries. It is more than half-past three."

"Very well—thank you!" said Adrienne kindly.

Andrew again bowed; but before going out he said to Adrienne :

"I forgot to tell you, mademoiselle, that Marshal Simon called about an hour ago; but, as you were only to be at home to Prince Djalma, we told him that you received no company."

"Very well," said Adrienne.

With another low bow, Andrew quitted the room, and all returned to silence.

For the precise reason that, up to the last minute of the hour previous to the time fixed for her interview with Djalma, the hopes of Adrienne had not been disturbed by the slightest shadow of doubt, the disappointment she now felt was the more dreadful. Casting a desponding look at one of the portraits placed above her, she murmured with a plaintive and despairing accent :

"Oh, mother!"

Hardly had Mademoiselle de Cardoville uttered the words than the windows were slightly shaken by a carriage rolling into the court-yard. The young lady started, and was unable to repress a low cry of joy. Her heart bounded at the thought of meeting Djalma, for this time she felt that he was really come. She was quite as certain of it as if she had seen him. She resumed her seat and brushed away a tear suspended from her long eyelashes. Her hand trembled like a leaf. The sound of several doors opening and shutting proved that the young lady was right in her conjecture. The gilded panels of the drawing-room door soon turned upon their hinges and the prince appeared.

While a second footman ushered in Djalma, Andrew placed on a gilded table, within reach of his mistress, a little silver salver, on which stood the crystal smelling-bottle. Then he withdrew, and the door of the room was closed.

The prince and Mademoiselle de Cardoville were left alone together.

CHAPTER XXIX

ADRIENNE AND DJALMA

THE prince had slowly approached Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

Notwithstanding the impetuosity of the Oriental's passions, his uncertain and timid step—timid, yet graceful—betrayed his profound emotion. He did not venture to lift his eyes to Adrienne's face; he had suddenly become very pale, and his finely formed hands, folded over his bosom in the attitude of adoration, trembled violently. With head bent down, he remained standing at a little distance from Adrienne. This embarrassment, ridiculous in any other person, appeared touching in this prince of twenty years of age, endowed with an almost fabulous intrepidity, and of so heroic and generous a character that no traveler could speak of the son of Kadjasing without a tribute of admiration and respect. Sweet emotion! chaste reserve! doubly interesting, if we consider that the burning passions of this youth were all the more inflammable because they had hitherto been held in check.

No less embarrassed than her cousin, Adrienne de Cardoville remained seated. Like Djalma, she cast down her eyes; but the burning blush on her cheeks, the quick heaving of her virgin bosom, revealed an emotion that she did not even attempt to hide. Notwithstanding the powers of her mind, by turns gay, graceful, and witty—notwithstanding the decision of her proud and independent character, and her complete acquaintance with the manners of the world—Adrienne shared Djalma's simple and enchanting awkwardness, and partook of that kind of temporary weakness, beneath which these two pure, ardent, and loving beings appeared sinking—as if unable to support the boiling agitation of the senses, combined with the intoxicating excitement of the heart.

And yet their eyes had not met. Each seemed to fear the first electric shock of the other's glance—that invincible attraction of two

impassioned beings—that sacred fire, which suddenly kindles the blood, and lifts two mortals from earth to heaven; for it is to approach the Divinity, to give one's self up with religious fervor to the most noble and irresistible sentiment that He has implanted within us—the only sentiment that, in His adorable wisdom, the Dispenser of all good has vouchsafed to sanctify, by endowing it with a spark of His own creative energy.

Djalma was the first to raise his eyes. They were moist and sparkling. The excitement of passionate love, the burning ardor of his age, so long repressed, the intense admiration in which he held ideal beauty, were all expressed in his look, mingled with respectful timidity, and gave to the countenance of this youth an undefinable, irresistible character. Yes, irresistible!—for, when Adrienne encountered his glance, she trembled in every limb, and felt herself attracted by a magnetic power. Already, her eyes were heavy with a kind of intoxicating languor, when, by a great effort of will and dignity, she succeeded in overcoming this delicious confusion, rose from her chair, and said to Djalma in a trembling voice:

“Prince, I am happy to receive you here.”

Then, pointing to one of the portraits suspended above her, she added, as if introducing him to a living person:

“Prince—my mother!”

With an instinct of rare delicacy, Adrienne had thus summoned her mother to be present at her interview with Djalma. It seemed a security for herself and the prince against the seductions of a first interview—which was likely to be all the more perilous, that they both knew themselves madly loved, that they both were free, and had only to answer to Providence for the treasures of happiness and enjoyment with which He had so magnificently endowed them. The prince understood Adrienne's thoughts; so that, when the young lady pointed to the portrait, Djalma, by a spontaneous movement full of grace and simplicity, knelt down before the picture, and said to it in a gentle but manly voice:

“I will love and revere you as my mother. And, in thought, my mother too shall be present, and stand like you, beside your child!”

No better answer could have been given to the feeling which induced Mademoiselle de Cardoville to place herself, as it were, under the protection of her mother. From that moment, confident in Djalma, confident in herself, the young lady felt more at her ease, and the delicious sense of happiness replaced those exciting emotions which had at first so violently agitated her.

Then, seating herself once more, she said to Djalma, as she pointed to the opposite chair:

"Pray take a seat, my dear cousin; and allow me to call you so, for there is too much ceremony in the word prince; and do you call me cousin also, for I find other names too grave. Having settled this point, we can talk together like old friends."

"Yes, cousin," answered Djalma, blushing.

"And, as frankness is proper between friends," resumed Adrienne, "I have first to make you a reproach," she added, with a half-smile.

The prince had remained standing, with his arm resting on the chimney-piece, in an attitude full of grace and respect.

"Yes, cousin," continued Adrienne, "a reproach that you will perhaps forgive me for making. I had expected you a little sooner."

"Perhaps, cousin, you may blame me for having come so soon."

"What do you mean?"

"At the moment when I left home, a man, whom I did not know, approached my carriage and said to me, with such an air of sincerity that I believed him: 'You are able to save the life of a person who has been a second father to you. Marshal Simon is in great danger, and, to rescue him, you must follow me on the instant——'"

"It was a snare," cried Adrienne, hastily. "Marshal Simon was here scarcely an hour ago."

"Indeed!" exclaimed Djalma joyfully, and as if he had been relieved from a great weight. "Then there will be nothing to sadden this happy day!"

"But, cousin," resumed Adrienne, "how came you not to suspect this emissary?"

"Some words, which afterward escaped from him, inspired me with doubts," answered Djalma; "but at first I followed him, fearing the marshal might be in danger—for I know that he also has enemies."

"Now that I reflect on it, you were quite right, cousin, for some new plot against the marshal was probable enough; and the least doubt was enough to induce you to go to him."

"I did so—even though you were waiting for me."

"It was a generous sacrifice; and my esteem for you is increased by it, if it could be increased," said Adrienne with emotion. "But what became of this man?"

"At my desire, he got into the carriage with me. Anxious about the marshal, and in despair at seeing the time wasted that I was to have passed with you, cousin, I pressed him with all sorts of questions. Several times he replied to me with embarrassment, and then the idea struck me that the whole might be a snare. Remembering all that they had already attempted to ruin me in your opinion, I immediately changed my course. The vexation of the man who accompanied me

then became so visible that I ought to have had no doubt upon the subject. Still, when I thought of Marshal Simon I felt a kind of vague remorse, which you, cousin, have now happily set at rest."

"Those people are implacable!" said Adrienne; "but our happiness will be stronger than their hate."

After a moment's silence, she resumed, with her habitual frankness:

"My dear cousin, it is impossible for me to conceal what I have at heart. Let us talk for a few seconds of the past, which was made so painful to us, and then we will forget it forever, like an evil dream."

"I will answer you sincerely, at the risk of injuring myself," said the prince.

"How could you make up your mind to exhibit yourself in public with ——"

"With that young girl?" interrupted Djalma.

"Yes, cousin," replied Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and she waited for Djalma's answer with anxious curiosity.

"A stranger to the customs of this country," said Djalma, without any embarrassment, for he spoke the truth, "with a mind weakened with despair, and misled by the fatal counsels of a man devoted to my enemies, I believed, even as I was told, that, by displaying before you the semblance of another love, I should excite your jealousy, and thus ——"

"Enough, cousin; I understand it all," said Adrienne hastily, interrupting Djalma in her turn, that she might spare him a painful confession. "I too must have been blinded by despair not to have seen through this wicked plot, especially after your rash, intrepid action. To risk death for the sake of my bouquet!" added Adrienne, shuddering at the mere remembrance. "But one last question," she resumed, "though I am already sure of your answer. Did you receive a letter that I wrote to you on the morning of the day in which I saw you at the theater?"

Djalma made no reply. A dark cloud passed over his fine countenance, and, for a second, his features assumed so menacing an expression that Adrienne was terrified at the effect produced by her words. But this violent agitation soon passed away, and Djalma's brow became once more calm and serene.

"I have been more merciful than I thought," said the prince to Adrienne, who looked at him with astonishment. "I wished to come hither worthy of you, my cousin. I pardoned the man who, to serve my enemies, had given me all those fatal counsels. The same person, I am sure, must have intercepted your letter. Just now, at the memory of the evils he thus caused me, I, for a moment, regretted my clemency.

But then, again, I thought of your letter of yesterday — and my anger is all gone."

"Then the sad time of fear and suspicion is over — suspicion, that



made me doubt of your sentiments, and you of mine. Oh, yes! far removed from us be that fatal past!" cried Adrienne de Cardoville with deep joy.

Then, as if she had relieved her heart from the last thought of sadness, she continued :

“The future is all our own — the radiant future, without cloud or obstacle, pure in the immensity of its horizon, and extending beyond the reach of sight !”

It is impossible to describe the tone of enthusiastic hope which accompanied these words. But suddenly Adrienne’s features assumed an expression of touching melancholy, and she added, in a voice of profound emotion :

“And yet — at this hour — so many unfortunate creatures suffer pain !”

This simple touch of pity for the misfortunes of others, at the moment when the noble maiden herself attained to the highest point of happiness, had such an effect on Djalma that involuntarily he fell on his knees before Adrienne, clasped his hands together, and turned toward her his fine countenance, with an almost daring expression. Then, hiding his face in his hands, he bowed his head without speaking a single word. There was a moment of deep silence. Adrienne was the first to break it, as she saw a tear steal through the slender fingers of the prince.

“My friend, what is the matter ?” she exclaimed, as, with a movement rapid as thought, she stooped forward, and, taking hold of Djalma’s hands, drew them from before his face. That face was bathed in tears.

“You weep !” cried Mademoiselle de Cardoville, so much agitated that she kept the hands of Djalma in her own ; and, unable to dry his tears, the young Hindoo allowed them to flow like so many drops of crystal over the pale gold of his cheeks.

“There is not in this wide world a happiness like to mine !” said the prince in his soft, melodious voice, and with a kind of exhaustion ; “therefore do I feel great sadness, and so it should be. You give me heaven, and were I to give you the whole earth it would be but a poor return. Alas ! what can man do for a divinity but humbly bless and adore ? He can never hope to return the gifts bestowed ; and this makes him suffer — not in his pride, but in his heart !”

Djalma did not exaggerate. He said what he really felt ; and the rather hyperbolical form, familiar to oriental nations, could alone express his thought.

The tone of his regret was so sincere, his humility so gentle and full of simplicity, that Adrienne, also moved to tears, answered him with an effusion of serious tenderness :

“My friend, we are both at the supreme point of happiness. Our future felicity appears to have no limits ; and yet, though derived from

different sources, sad reflections have come to both of us. It is, you see, that there are some sorts of happiness which make you dizzy with their own immensity. For a moment the heart, the mind, the soul are incapable of containing so much bliss; it overflows and drowns us. Thus the flowers sometimes hang their heads, oppressed by the too ardent rays of the sun, which is yet their love and life. Oh, my friend! this sadness may be great, but it is also sweet!"

As she uttered these words, the voice of Adrienne grew fainter and fainter, and her head bowed lower, as if she were indeed sinking beneath the weight of her happiness.

Djalma had remained kneeling before her, his hands in hers—so that as she thus bent forward her ivory forehead and golden hair touched the amber-colored brow and ebon curls of Djalma.

And the sweet, silent tears of the two young lovers flowed together, and mingled as they fell on their clasped hands.

While this scene was passing in the Hotel de Cardoville, Agricola had gone to the Rue de Vaugirard to deliver a letter from Adrienne to M. Hardy.

CHAPTER XXX

"THE IMITATION"



AS we have already said, M. Hardy occupied a pavilion in the "Retreat" annexed to the house in the Rue de Vaugirard, inhabited by a goodly number of the reverend fathers of the Company of Jesus. Nothing could be calmer and more silent than this dwelling. Every one spoke in whispers, and the servants themselves had something oily in their words, something sanctified in their very walk.

Like all that is subject to the chilling and destructive influences of these men, this mournfully quiet house was entirely wanting in life and animation. The boarders passed an existence of wearisome and icy monotony, only broken by the use of certain devotional exercises; and thus, in accordance with the selfish calculation of the reverend fathers, the mind, deprived of all nourishment and all external support, soon began to droop and pine away in solitude. The heart seemed to beat more slowly, the soul was benumbed, the character weakened; at last, all free will, all power of discrimination, was extinguished, and the boarders, submitting to the same process of self-annihilation as the novices of the Company, became, like them, mere "corpses" in the hands of the brotherhood.

The object of these maneuvers was clear and simple. They secured the means of obtaining all kinds of donations, the constant aim of the skillful policy and merciless cupidity of these priests. By the aid of enormous sums, of which they thus become possessors or trustees, they follow out and obtain the success of their projects, even though murder, incendiarism, revolt, and all the horrors of civil war, excited by and through them, should drench in blood the lands over which they seek to extend their dark dominion.

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Such, then, was the asylum of *peace* and *innocence* in which François Hardy had taken refuge. He occupied the ground-floor of a summer-

house, which opened upon a portion of the garden. His apartments had been judiciously chosen, for we know with what profound and diabolical craft the reverend fathers avail themselves of material influences to make a deep impression upon the minds they are molding to their purpose.

Imagine a prospect bounded by a high wall of a blackish gray, half covered with ivy, the plant peculiar to ruins. A dark avenue of old yew-trees, so fit to shade the grave with their sepulchral verdure, extended from this wall to a little semicircle in front of the apartment generally occupied by M. Hardy. Two or three mounds of earth, bordered with box, symmetrically cut, completed the charms of this garden, which in every respect resembled a cemetery.

It was about two o'clock in the afternoon. Though the April sun shone brightly, its rays, intercepted by the high wall of which we have spoken, could not penetrate into that portion of the garden, obscure, damp, and cold as a cavern, which communicated with M. Hardy's apartment. The room was furnished with a perfect sense of the comfortable. A soft carpet covered the floor; thick curtains of dark-green baize, the same color as the walls, sheltered an excellent bed, and hung in folds about the glass door, which opened on the garden. Some pieces of mahogany furniture, plain, but very clean and bright, stood round the room. Above the secretary, placed just in front of the bed, was a large ivory crucifix upon a black velvet ground. The chimney-piece was adorned with a clock, in an ebony case, with ivory ornaments representing all sorts of gloomy emblems, such as hour-glasses, scythes, death's-heads, etc.

Now imagine this scene in twilight, with its solitary and mournful silence, only broken at the hour of prayer by the lugubrious sound of the bells of the neighboring chapel, and you will recognize the infernal skill with which these dangerous priests know how to turn to account every external object when they wish to influence the mind of those they are anxious to gain over.

And this was not all. After appealing to the senses, it was necessary to address themselves to the intellect — and this was the method adopted by the reverend fathers :

A single book — but one — was left, as if by chance, within reach. This book was Thomas à Kempis's *Imitation*. But as it might happen that M. Hardy would not have the courage or the desire to read this book, thoughts and reflections borrowed from its merciless pages, and written in very large characters, were suspended in black frames close to the bed, or at other parts within sight, so that, involuntarily, in the sad leisure of his inactive dejection, the dweller's eyes were almost

necessarily attracted by them. To that fatal circle of despairing thoughts they confined the already weakened mind of this unfortunate man, so long a prey to the most acute sorrow. What he read mechanically, every instant of the day and night, whenever the blessed sleep fled from his eyes inflamed with tears, was not enough merely to plunge the soul of the victim into incurable despair, but also to reduce him to the corpse-like obedience required by the Society of Jesus. In that awful book may be found a thousand terrors to operate on weak minds, a thousand slavish maxims to chain and degrade the pusillanimous soul.

And now imagine M. Hardy carried wounded into this house; while his heart, torn by bitter grief and the sense of horrible treachery, bled even faster than his external injuries. Attended with the utmost care, and thanks to the acknowledged skill of Dr. Balemier, M. Hardy soon recovered from the hurts he had received when he threw himself into the embers of his burning factory. Yet, in order to favor the projects of the reverend fathers, a drug, harmless enough in its effects, but destined to act for a time upon the mind of the patient, and often employed for that purpose in similar important cases by the pious doctor, was administered to Hardy, and had kept him pretty long in a state of mental torpor. To a soul agonized by cruel deceptions, it appears an inestimable benefit to be plunged into that kind of torpor, which at least prevents one from dwelling upon the past. Hardy resigned himself entirely to this profound apathy, and at length came to regard it as the supreme good. Thus do unfortunate wretches tortured by cruel diseases accept with gratitude the opiate which kills them slowly, but which at least deadens the sense of pain.

In sketching the portrait of M. Hardy, we tried to give some idea of the exquisite delicacy of his tender soul, of his painful susceptibility with regard to anything base or wicked, and of his extreme goodness, uprightness, and generosity. We now allude to these admirable qualities, because we must observe that with him, as with almost all who possess them, they were not, and could not be, united with an energetic and resolute character. Admirably persevering in good deeds, the influence of this excellent man was insinuating rather than commanding. It was not by the bold energy and somewhat overbearing will, peculiar to other men of great and noble heart, that Hardy had realized the prodigy of his common dwelling-house; it was by affectionate persuasion, for with him mildness took the place of force. At sight of any baseness or injustice, he did not rouse himself, furious and threatening; but he suffered intense pain. He did not boldly attack the criminal, but he turned away from him in pity and sorrow. And then his loving heart, so full of feminine delicacy, had an irresistible longing for the

blessed contact of dear affections; they alone could keep it alive—even as a poor, frail bird dies with the cold, when it can no longer lie close to its brethren and receive and communicate the sweet warmth of the maternal nest.

And now this sensitive organization, this extremely susceptible nature, receives blow after blow from sorrows and deceptions, one of which would suffice to shake, if it did not conquer, the firmest and most resolute character.

Hardy's best friend has infamously betrayed him.

His adored mistress has abandoned him.

The house which he had founded for the benefit of his workmen, whom he loved as brethren, is reduced to a heap of ashes.

What then happens?

All the springs of his soul are at once broken. Too feeble to resist such frightful attacks, too fatally deceived to seek refuge in other affections, too much discouraged to think of laying the first stone of any new edifice—this poor heart, isolated from every salutary influence, finds oblivion of the world and of itself in a kind of gloomy torpor. And if some remaining instincts of life and affection, at long intervals, endeavored to rouse themselves within him, and if, half opening his mind's eye, which he had kept closed against the present, the past, and the future, Hardy looks around him—what does he see? Only these sentences, so full of terrible despair:

“Thou art nothing but dust and ashes.”

“Grief and tears are thy portion.”

“Believe not in any son of man.”

“There are no such things as friendship or ties of kindred.”

“All human affections are false.”

“Die in the morning, and thou wilt be forgotten before night.”

“Be humble—despise thyself, and let others despise thee.”

“Think not, reason not, live not, but commit thy fate to the hands of a superior, who will think and reason for thee.”

“Weep, suffer, think upon death.”

“Yes, death! always death—that should be thy thought when thou thinkest; but it is better not to think at all.”

“Let a feeling of ceaseless woe prepare thy way to heaven.”

“It is only by sorrow that we are welcome to the terrible God whom we adore!”

Such were the consolations offered to this unfortunate man. Af-frighted, he again closed his eyes, and fell back into his lethargy. As for leaving this gloomy retreat, he could not, or rather he did not desire to do so. He had lost the power of will; and then, it must be con-

fessed, he had finished by getting accustomed to this house, and liked it well; they paid him such discreet attentions, and yet left him so much alone with his grief; there reigned all around such a death-like silence, which harmonized closely with the silence of his heart; and that was now the tomb of his last love, last friendship, last hope. All energy was dead within him.

Then began that slow but inevitable transformation, so judiciously foreseen by Rodin, who directed the whole of this machination, even in its smallest details.

At first alarmed by the dreadful maxims which surrounded him, M. Hardy had at length accustomed himself to read them over almost mechanically, just as the captive, in his mournful hours of leisure, counts the nails in the door of his prison or the bars of the grated window. This was already a great point gained by the reverend fathers.

And soon his weakened mind was struck with the apparent correctness of these false and melancholy aphorisms.

Thus he read:

“Do not count upon the affection of any human creature.”

And he had himself been shamefully betrayed.

“Man is born to sorrow and despair.”

And he was himself despairing.

“There is no rest save in the cessation of thought.”

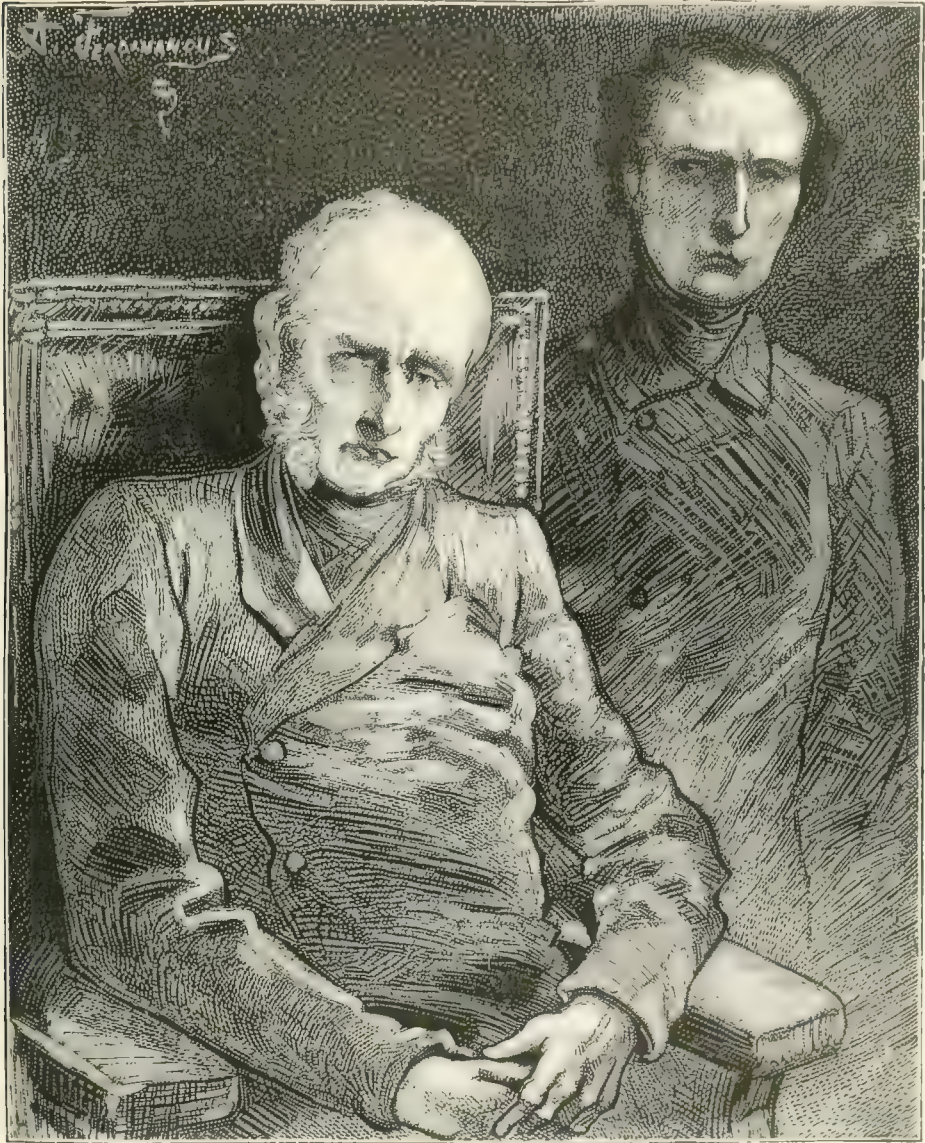
And the slumber of his mind had brought some relief to his pain.

Peepholes, skillfully concealed by the hangings and in the wainscoting of these apartments, enabled the reverend fathers at all times to see and hear the boarders, and above all to observe their countenance and manner, when they believed themselves to be alone.

Every exclamation of grief which escaped Hardy in his gloomy solitude was repeated to Father d'Aigrigny by a mysterious listener. The reverend father, following scrupulously Rodin's instructions, had at first visited his boarder very rarely. We have said that when Father d'Aigrigny wished it he could display an almost irresistible power of charming; and accordingly he threw all his tact and skill into the interviews he had with Hardy, when he came from time to time to inquire after his health. Informed of everything by his spies, and aided by his natural sagacity, he soon saw all the use that might be made of the physical and moral prostration of the boarder. Certain beforehand that Hardy would not take the hint, he spoke to him frequently of the gloom of the house, advising him affectionately to leave it if he felt oppressed by its monotony, or at all events to seek beyond its walls for some pleasure and amusement.

To speak of pleasure and amusement to this unfortunate man was

in his present state to insure a refusal, and so it of course happened. Father d'Aigrigny did not at first try to gain the recluse's confidence, nor did he speak to him of sorrow: but every time he came he appeared



to take such a tender interest in him, and showed it by a few simple and well-timed words. By degrees these interviews, at first so rare, became more frequent and longer. Endowed with a flow of honeyed, insinuating, and persuasive eloquence, Father d'Aigrigny naturally

took for his theme those gloomy maxims to which Hardy's attention was now so often directed.

Supple, prudent, skillful, knowing that the hermit had hitherto professed that generous natural religion which teaches the grateful adoration of God, the love of humanity, the worship of what is just and good, and which, disclaiming dogmas, professes the same veneration for Marcus Aurelius as for Confucius, for Plato as for Christ, for Moses as for Lycurgus, Father d'Aigrigny did not at first attempt to convert him, but began by incessantly reminding him of the abominable deceptions practiced upon him; and, instead of describing such treachery as an exception in life, instead of trying to calm, encourage, and revive this drooping soul, instead of exhorting Hardy to seek oblivion and consolation in the discharge of his duties toward humanity, toward his brethren, whom he had previously loved and succored, Father d'Aigrigny strove to inflame the bleeding wounds of the unfortunate man, painted the human race in the most atrocious blackness, and, by declaring all men treacherous, ungrateful, wicked, succeeded in rendering his despair incurable.

Having attained this object, the Jesuit took another step. Knowing Hardy's admirable goodness of heart, and profiting by the weakened state of his mind, he spoke to him of the consolation to be derived by a man overwhelmed with sorrow from the belief that every one of his tears, instead of being unfruitful, was in fact agreeable to God, and might aid in the salvation of souls—the belief, as the reverend father adroitly added, that by faith alone can sorrow be made useful to humanity and acceptable to Divinity.

Whatever impiety, whatever atrocious Machiavelism there was in these detestable maxims, which make of a loving, kind Deity a being delighted with the tears of his creatures, was thus skillfully concealed from Hardy's eyes, whose generous instincts were still alive. Soon did this loving and tender soul, whom unworthy priests were driving to a sort of moral suicide, find a mournful charm in the fiction that his sorrows would at least be profitable to other men. It was at first only a fiction; but the enfeebled mind which takes pleasure in such a fable finishes by receiving it as a reality, and by degrees will submit to the consequences.

Such was Hardy's moral and physical state when, by means of a servant who had been bought over, he received from Agricola Baudoin a letter requesting an interview.

The day of the interview had arrived.

Two or three hours before the moment fixed for the visit of Agricola Father d'Aigrigny entered M. Hardy's room.

CHAPTER XXXI

THE VISIT

WHEN Father d'Aigrigny entered the room, M. Hardy was seated in a large arm-chair. His attitude was indicative of extreme dejection. Beside him, on a little table, was a potion ordered by Dr. Baleinier, for the frail constitution of Hardy had been rudely shaken by so many cruel strokes, and he was now only the shadow of his former self. His countenance was very pale and thin, but expressed for the moment a kind of mournful tranquillity. In that short time his hair had become completely gray; his eye wandered here and there, dull, languishing, almost dead. He leaned his head against the back of his seat, and his slim hands, protruding from the large sleeves of his brown dressing-gown, rested on the arms of the chair.

As he approached, Father d'Aigrigny gave to his countenance the most benignant and affectionate expression. His glance seemed full of mildness and amenity, and the tone of his voice had never been more caressing.

"Well, my dear son!" said he to M. Hardy, as he embraced him with hypocritical tenderness (the Jesuit is fond of an embrace), "how do you find yourself to-day?"

"As usual, father."

"Do you continue satisfied with the attention of the servants of the house, my dear son?"

"Yes, father."

"The silence of which you are so fond, my dear son, has not, I hope, been disturbed?"

"No—I thank you."

"Does your apartment still please you?"

"Perfectly."

"Are you in want of nothing?"

"Of nothing, father."

"We are so happy to see that you take pleasure in our poor house, my dear son, that we would fain anticipate your desires."

"I desire nothing, father—nothing but sleep, which is always so grateful to me," added M. Hardy, with the deepest dejection.

"Sleep is oblivion; and here below it is better to forget than to remember, since men are so thankless and wicked that almost every remembrance is bitter—is it not so, my dear son?"

"Alas! it is too true, father!"

"I admire your pious resignation, my dear son. Ah! how agreeable to God is this constant gentleness in affliction! Believe me, my son, your tears and your grief are an offering which will merit favor of the Lord, both for yourself and your brethren. Man is born for suffering in this world; and to suffer with gratitude to God is really to pray—and we never pray for ourselves alone, but for the whole of the human race."

"Heaven grant that my sorrows may not be sterile! To suffer is to pray," repeated Hardy, as if recalling that thought. "To suffer is to pray—to pray for the whole human race; and yet formerly—it seemed to me—that the destiny of man ——"

"Go on, my dear son; complete your thought," said Father d'Aigrigny, seeing that Hardy stopped short.

After a moment's hesitation, the latter, who had raised himself a little in his arm-chair, threw himself back exhausted, and murmured:

"Why should I think? It wearies me, and I have no strength for it."

"You say well, my dear son; why should you think? It is better to believe."

"Yes, father; it is better to believe and suffer, and, above all—forget." And M. Hardy again fell back in his chair, and covered his eyes with his hand.

"Alas, my dear son!" said Father d'Aigrigny, with tears and a trembling voice, and this accomplished actor knelt down by Hardy's chair; "alas! how could the friend who so abominably betrayed you bring himself to injure such a heart as yours? But it is ever thus, when we seek the love of the creature rather than that of the Creator—and this unworthy friend ——"

"Oh! for pity's sake, do not speak to me of that treachery!" said Hardy, interrupting the reverend father with a voice of supplication.

"Well! no—I will not speak of it, my beloved son. Let us forget the perjured friend—the wretch whom sooner or later the vengeance of God will overtake, for having sported so odiously with your noble confidence. Let us forget also that unfortunate woman, whose crime, great in the eyes of the Lord, since for you she trampled underfoot the

most sacred duties, will yet bring down upon her a terrible punishment—and one day ——”

Again interrupting Father d'Aigrigny, M. Hardy said to him, in a tone of repressed but bitter agony: “It is too much! you do not know, father, the pain you give me—oh! you do not know it!”

“Forgive me—oh! forgive me, my son. But, alas! you see that the mere remembrance of these terrestrial attachments even now causes you the most violent grief; does not this prove that you can only hope for consolation and rest above the delusions of this corrupting and corrupted world?”

“Oh, God! shall I ever find them?” cried the unfortunate man, with an outbreak of despair.

“Will you ever find them?” exclaimed Father d'Aigrigny, with admirably acted emotion. “Can you doubt of it? Oh! what a glorious day it will be for me, when, having advanced a little farther in that path of salvation which you are now digging with your tears, all that for the present seems plunged in darkness will be illumined with ineffable and divine light! Oh! what a sweet, what a blessed day! when the last ties which bind you to this vile earth shall be broken, and you will become one of us, and only aspire to eternal felicity!”

“Yes—death!”

“Say, rather, immortal life in heaven, my dear son, where you will have a glorious place, not far from the everlasting throne. My paternal heart desires and hopes it for you; and your name is repeated every day in my prayers, and in those of our good fathers.”

“At least, I do all I can to attain to this blind faith, to this complete abnegation of the things of earth, by which alone, you tell me, I am to obtain rest.”

“My poor, dear son, if your Christian modesty allowed you to compare what you were in the first days of your arrival at this house with what you are at present,—thanks only to your sincere desire to believe,—you would be quite astonished. What a difference! To your agitation and despair has succeeded a religious calm. Is not this true?”

“Yes, it is true. Sometimes, when I have suffered a long while, my heart ceases to throb—I am calm—the dead also are calm,” said Hardy as his head sank upon his breast.

“Ah, my dear son, my dear son! you break my heart when I hear you talk thus. I fear that you still regret that worldly life, so fertile in abominable deceptions. But, this very day, we shall have a decisive proof.”

“How so, father?”

"That young artisan, one of the best workmen in your factory, is coming to see you."

"Ah, yes!" said Hardy, after a minute's reflection, for his memory had been considerably weakened, as well as his other mental powers. "True! Agricola is coming. I think I shall see him with pleasure."

"Well, my dear son, your interview with him will be the proof I speak of. The presence of this worthy youth will recall the memory of the active and busy life that you once led — perhaps make you disdain the pious repose which you now enjoy. It may be that you will wish to recommence your career, to form new friendships, to seek for other affections, to live again, as in past times, a noisy and agitated life. If these desires should be roused within you, then you are not yet fit for solitude. Then obey your instincts, my dear son; return to the pleasures, the joys, the festivals of life; my prayers will follow you in the tumult of the world. But remember always, my dear son, that if one day your soul should be torn by new deeds of treachery, this peaceful asylum will be open to you as now, and you will find me ready to weep with you over the hollowness and the vanity of all earthly things."

While Father d'Aigrigny was speaking, M. Hardy had listened to him almost in terror. At the mere thought of returning amid the storms of a life so painfully tried, this poor soul shrunk back upon itself, trembling with dismay. It was almost in a tone of entreaty that the unfortunate man exclaimed:

"I, father! return to the world, in which I suffered so much, and where I left behind me all my illusions! I take part in pleasures and festivals! — ah! it is a cruel mockery!"

"It is no mockery, my dear son. You must expect that the sight and talk of this honest artisan will revive in you those ideas, which you now believe destroyed forever. In that case, my dear son, try once more the life of the world. This retreat will always be open to you, after new sorrows and new deceptions."

"And for what purpose expose myself to a renewal of suffering?" cried M. Hardy, with a heart-rending expression. "I can hardly support that which I already endure. Oh! never, never! — oblivion — the silence of the tomb — that is all I desire —"

"So it seems to you now, my dear son, because no voice from without disturbs the calm of your solitude, or weakens those sacred hopes which tell you of happiness beyond the tomb; but this workman, thinking less of your salvation than of his own interest and that of his fellows, will soon be here —"

"Alas, father!" said M. Hardy, interrupting the Jesuit; "I had the good fortune to do for my workmen all that, humanly speaking, can be

done for them. My destiny did not allow me to continue the work. I have paid my debt to humanity; my strength is exhausted; I now only ask for oblivion and repose. It is too much, my God!" cried the unfortunate man, with an indescribable expression of lassitude and despair.

"No doubt, my dear, good son, your generosity has been without parallel; but it is in the name of this very generosity that this artisan will come to impose new sacrifices upon you. Yes; for, with hearts like yours, the past has also its obligations, and it will be almost impossible for you to refuse the supplications of your workmen. You will be forced to return to a life of incessant activity, to raise up a fallen edifice from its ruins, and to reëstablish to-day what you founded twenty years ago, in all the strength and ardor of youth. You will have again to form those commercial connections by whom your scrupulous honor has been so often wounded, and rivet once more those chains which bind the great capitalist to an existence of care and labor. But then, what compensations you will have! In a few years you will attain by gigantic efforts to the same point at which you were at the time of this horrible catastrophe. And, at all events, it will be some consolation, during your labors, that you will be no longer the dupe of a false friend, whose feigned attachment gave such an apparent charm to your existence; you will no longer have to reproach yourself with an adulterous intercourse, from which you fancied that you could gather new strength and energy for good—as if, alas! what is in itself sinful could ever lead to happiness. No! no! approaching the end of your career, disenchanted from the spells of friendship, acknowledging the worthlessness of guilty passions, alone, always alone, you will bravely confront the storms of life. No doubt on quitting this calm and pious asylum, where no sound disturbs your meditative rest, the contrast will at first be great—but even this contrast ——"

"Enough! for mercy's sake, enough!" cried Hardy, interrupting with feeble voice the reverend father; "only to hear you talk of the agitations of such a life makes me giddy, and my head can hardly bear it. Oh, no! no! rest before everything—even were it the rest of the grave!"

"But how will you be able to resist the entreaties of this young artisan? Persons once obliged have some claim on their benefactors. You will not be able to escape from his prayers."

"Well, father! if it must be so, I will not see him. I thought I should find a sort of pleasure in this interview; but I now feel it will be wiser to give it up."

"But he will not give it up; he will insist on seeing you."

"Have the kindness, father, to let him know that I am not well—that it is impossible for me to see any one."

"Listen to me, my dear son. In our day there exist unfortunate prejudices with regard to the poor servants of the Lord. Because you have remained voluntarily in the midst of us, after being brought dying into this house, were you to refuse an interview that you have already agreed to grant, it might be supposed that you submitted to some undue influence. Though the supposition is absurd, we do not wish to expose ourselves to any such. It will then be better to receive this young artisan."

"Father, what you ask of me is above my strength. This conversation has exhausted me."

"But, my dear son, this workman will soon be here. I may tell him that you will not see him, but he will certainly not believe me."

"Alas, father! have pity on me! I tell you it is impossible for me to see any one. I suffer too much."

"Well then, let us find some other plan. If you were to write to him, to appoint a meeting for to-morrow?"

"Neither to-morrow nor ever!" cried the unfortunate man. "I will see no one. I will be alone—always alone. Can that do any harm? Will not that liberty be allowed me?"

"Calm yourself, my son. Follow my advice. Do not see this worthy fellow to-day, since you dread the interview; but take no rash engagements for the future. To-morrow you may change your mind; let your refusal to receive him be as vague as possible."

"As you please, father."

"But although the hour fixed for this workman's visit is not yet come," said the reverend father, "it will perhaps be as well to write to him directly."

"I have not the strength, father."

"Try."

"Impossible; I feel myself too weak."

"Come! a little courage," said the reverend father. He fetched from the secretary all that was required for writing, and, placing a portfolio and sheet of paper on Hardy's knees, he held the inkstand, and presented him with a pen."

"I assure you, father, that I cannot write," said M. Hardy, in an exhausted voice.

"Only a few words," resumed Father d'Aigrigny, with merciless perseverance; and he placed the pen between the almost lifeless fingers of M. Hardy.

"Alas, father! my vision is so bad that I can scarcely see at all."



M. HARDY VISITED BY HIS FACTORY OPERATIVES.

The unfortunate man spoke the truth. His eyes were filled with tears, so painful were the emotions which the Jesuit had awakened within him.

"Be calm, my son, and I will guide your dear hand—only dictate——"

"Father, let me entreat you to write yourself. I will sign it."

"No, my dear son; for a thousand reasons, it must be in your own handwriting. A few lines will suffice."

"But, father——"

"Come, it must be done, or I shall admit this workman," said Father d'Aigrigny dryly, as he saw by the increasing weakness of Hardy's mind that he might display firmness on this head, and afterward return to milder means.

Therefore, he fixed his gray, round, brilliant eyes, like unto those of a bird of prey, full upon Hardy, with a severe expression. The wretched man shuddered beneath that fatal glance, and answered with a sigh :

"I will write, father—I will write—but let me beg you to dictate to me; my head is too weak." And he wiped away his tears with his burning, feverish hand.

Father d'Aigrigny dictated the following lines :

"MY DEAR AGRICOLA : I have reflected that an interview with you would be useless. It would only serve to revive bitter regrets, which I have succeeded in forgetting with the help of God and the sweet consolations of religion."

The reverend father paused a moment. M. Hardy grew paler, and his trembling hand was hardly able to hold the pen. His brow was bathed in a cold sweat. Father d'Aigrigny drew a handkerchief from his pocket and wiped the face of his victim, while he said to him, with a renewal of affectionate solicitude : "Come, my dear, good son, have a little courage. I did not advise you to decline this interview—on the contrary; but since, for your own peace of mind, you wish to put it off, try at least to finish your letter. For, after all, what is it that I desire? To see you enjoy a religious calm, after so many painful agitations."

"Yes, father; I know. You are very good," answered M. Hardy, in a grateful tone. "Forgive my weakness."

"Are you able to continue the letter, my dear son?"

"Yes, father."

"Write, then," said the reverend father, continuing to dictate as follows :

"I enjoy profound peace, I am attended with every care, and, thanks to the Divine mercy, I hope to finish my life in a Christian manner, far from a world of which I recognize the vanity. I do not bid you farewell; but, adieu till our next meeting, my dear Agricola—for I wish to express to you in person all my good wishes for yourself and your worthy comrades. Be my interpreter with them. As soon as I am in a state to receive you, I will let you know. Until then, believe me,

"Yours affectionately."

"Do you find this letter a suitable one, my dear son?" said the reverend father to M. Hardy.

"Yes, father."

"Please then to sign it."

"Yes, father."

And the unfortunate man, having affixed his signature, felt his strength fail him, and threw himself back exhausted.

"That is not all, my dear son," added Father d'Aigrigny, drawing another paper from his pocket; "you must have the goodness to sign this new power of attorney, to enable our father-solicitor to terminate the affair in question."

"Oh, dear! oh, dear!" cried M. Hardy, with a sort of feverish impatience. "You see, father, that my strength is exhausted."

"You will only have to sign this paper when you have read it, my dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny, presenting a stamped sheet, scrawled over with almost illegible writing.

"Father, I cannot read it to-day."

"But it must be done, my dear son. Pardon my indiscretion; but we are poor—and——"

"I will sign it, father."

"But you must read what you sign, my son."

"To what end? Give it me," said Hardy, worn out, as it were, by the inflexible obstinacy of the reverend father.

"Since you will have it so, my dear son," said the Jesuit, presenting the paper. M. Hardy signed and fell back in extreme dejection.

At this instant a servant, having first knocked at the door, entered the room and said to Father d'Aigrigny:

"M. Agricola Baudoin wishes to speak to M. Hardy; he comes, he says, by appointment."

"Very well. Let him wait," answered Father d'Aigrigny, with as much vexation as surprise; and having made a sign to the servant to withdraw, he said to M. Hardy: "This worthy fellow is in a great hurry to see you, my dear son, for he comes two hours before the appointed time. It must now be as you please; will you receive him?"

"But, father," said M. Hardy, with a kind of painful irritation, "you

can see how feeble I am. Have mercy on me, I entreat you, and give me rest—yes, I repeat it; were it even the rest of the tomb. Only, for Heaven's sake, let me be quiet."

"One day you will enjoy the eternal peace of the elect, my dear son," said Father d'Aigrigny affectionately; "for all your tears and sorrows are acceptable to the Lord."

So saying, he went out. Hardy, left alone, clasped his hands in despair, burst into tears, and, sliding down from the chair, sank upon his knees.

"Oh, God! oh, God!" he exclaimed; "take me from this world! I am too unhappy."

Then bowing his head to the seat, he hid his face in his hands and continued to weep bitterly.

Suddenly the sound of voices, growing louder and louder, and engaged in some kind of dispute, was plainly heard. Then the door was thrown open with violence, and Father d'Aigrigny, reeling beneath the shock, staggered into the room. He had just been dashed aside by the vigorous arm of Agricola.

"What, sir! do you dare to employ force and violence?" cried Father d'Aigrigny, pale with rage.

"I dare do anything to see M. Hardy," replied the smith; and he advanced hastily toward his old master, whom he beheld kneeling in the middle of the room.

CHAPTER XXXII

AGRICOLA BAUDOIN

HARDLY able to control his vexation and rage, Father d'Aigrigny not only darted angry and threatening glances at Agricola, but, from time to time, he looked anxiously toward the door, as though he dreaded every moment the entrance of a second person.

When the smith had looked well at his former master, he recoiled, struck with surprise and grief, at the ravages wrought by sorrow in the countenance of M. Hardy.

For some seconds the three actors in this scene remained silent.

Agricola was not yet aware of the moral weakness of Hardy, accustomed as he had been to meet with as much elevation of mind as goodness of heart in this excellent man.

Father d'Aigrigny was the first to break the silence, by saying to his boarder, with an emphasis on every word:

"I can understand, my dear son, that after the positive desire expressed by you not to receive this young man, his presence here must be very painful to you. I hope, then, that from deference, or at least from gratitude, he will lose no time in withdrawing, and thus put an end to a situation already too much prolonged."

Agricola made no answer to Father d'Aigrigny. He turned his back upon him, and, addressing himself to Hardy, whom he had been contemplating for some minutes with deep emotion, while the large tears rolled from his eyes, he said to him:

"Ah, sir! how glad I am to see you, though you still look so very ill! My comrades would be happy to be in my place. If you knew all they wished me to tell you on their behalf—for we have all one soul to love and revere you!"

Father d'Aigrigny threw a glance at Hardy, which signified: "What did I tell you"—then, approaching Agricola, he thus addressed him with an air of impatience: "I have already remarked to you that your presence here is not required."

But Agricola, without answering or turning toward him, continued:

"M. Hardy, have the goodness to send away this man. My father and I know him—he is well aware of that."

Then, looking at Father d'Aigrigny, the smith added harshly, with an air of indignation mingled with disgust:

"If you wish to hear what I have to say of you to M. Hardy, you can come back presently; but I have now to speak to my master on private affairs, and to deliver to him a letter from Mademoiselle de Cardoville, who likewise knows you—unfortunately for her."

The Jesuit remained impassible, and replied:

"Allow me to observe, sir, that you have somewhat mistaken your part. I am here at home, where I have the honor to receive M. Hardy. It would be for me to require that you should withdraw instantly."

"Father," said Hardy, with deference, "pray excuse Agricola. His attachment for me carries him too far; but since he *is* here, and has some private matters to communicate, permit me to have a few minutes conversation with him."

"*Permit* you, my dear son?" said Father d'Aigrigny, with well-feigned surprise. "Why should you ask me? Are you not perfectly free to do as you please? And was it not against my advice that you just now insisted on declining this interview?"

"It is true, father."

After what had passed, Father d'Aigrigny could not have persevered without compromising himself. He rose, therefore, and pressed the hand of Hardy, saying to him, with an expressive gesture:

"Till we meet again, my dear son! only remember our conversation and what I predicted."

"Till we meet, father! I shall not forget," answered Hardy mournfully.

And the reverend father left the room.

Astonished and confounded, Agricola asked himself if this were really his old master, who called the Abbé d'Aigrigny *father*, and spoke to him with so much deference and humility.

Then, as he examined his countenance more narrowly, he observed in his wasted features an expression of exhaustion and lassitude which filled him with alarm and grief. Trying to conceal his painful surprise, he said to him:

"At length, sir, you are about to be restored to us. We shall see you once more in the midst of your workmen. Ah! your return will make many happy hearts, and put an end to all sorts of uneasiness; for, if that were possible, we should love you still more, having feared a moment to lose you."

"Good and worthy fellow!" said Hardy, with a smile of melancholy kindness, as he extended his hand to Agricola; "I never doubted of your attachment or that of your comrades. Their gratitude has amply repaid me for the little good I was able to do them."

"And the good you will yet do them, sir, for ——"

M. Hardy interrupted Agricola, and said to him: "Listen to me, my friend. Before continuing this interview, I must speak frankly, that neither you nor your comrades may cherish vain hopes. I have resolved to live henceforth, if not in a cloister, at least in the most profound solitude, for I am weary, you see, my friend—oh! very weary!"

"But we are not weary of loving you, sir," cried the smith, more and more alarmed at the words and manner of M. Hardy. "It is our turn now to prove our devotion, and by labor, zeal, and disinterestedness to help you in restoring the factory, your noble and generous work."

Hardy shook his head mournfully. "I repeat, my friend," he resumed, "that I have done with active life. In a little time, you see, I have grown twenty years older. I have neither the strength, the will, nor the courage to begin again to work as in times past. I have done what I could for my fellow-creatures; I have paid my debt. But now I have only one wish—*rest*; one hope—the *comfort* and the *peace* procured by religion."

"What, sir!" said Agricola, in the utmost amazement; "you prefer to live in this melancholy solitude to being once more in the midst of us who love you so well—you think you will be happier with these priests than in your factory, raised from its ruins, and become more flourishing than ever?"

"There is no longer any happiness possible for me here below," said M. Hardy bitterly.

After a moment's hesitation, Agricola resumed in an agitated voice: "Sir, an infamous deception is practiced upon you."

"What do you mean, my friend?"

"I tell you, M. Hardy, that these priests who surround you have base designs of their own. Do you know, sir, in what house you are?"

"In a house belonging to some good men of the Company of Jesus."

"Yes, your most mortal enemies."

"My enemies!" said Hardy, with a smile of melancholy indifference. "I have now nothing to fear from enemies. Where could they stab me? there is no room left."

"They wish to deprive you, sir, of your share in an immense inheritance," cried the smith. "It is a plan laid with infernal ability. The daughters of Marshal Simon, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, you, my adopted brother Gabriel—all, in fact, who belong to your family—have

already been victims to their machinations. I tell you that these priests only intend to abuse your confidence. It is for this reason that, after the burning of the factory, they had you brought hither almost dying and kept you secluded from every eye. It is for this ——”



Hardy interrupted Agricola and said: “You are deceived with regard to these holy men, my friend. They have taken the greatest care of me; and, as for this pretended inheritance, what do I now care

for the goods of this world? The ties and the affections which bind us to this vale of misery and tears are now as nothing to me. I offer my sufferings to the Lord, and wait till he calls me in his mercy."

"No—no, sir—it is impossible that you can be changed to this degree," said Agricola, who could not bring himself to believe what he heard. "You give credence to these maxims of despair! You, that always taught us to love and admire the inexhaustible goodness of a paternal deity!—and we believed you, for he had sent you amongst us."

"I must now submit to his will, since it has pleased him to take me from amongst you—no doubt because, in spite of my good intentions, I did not serve him as he wills to be served. I kept in view the creature rather than the creator."

"And how, sir, could you better serve and honor the Divinity," cried the smith, more and more distressed, "than by encouraging and rewarding labor and probity, and making men better by securing their happiness—treating your workmen as brethren, developing their intelligence, giving them a taste for the good and beautiful, propagating amongst them sentiments of equality, fraternity, and evangelical union? Ah, sir! to revive your courage, remember the good you have done, and the daily benedictions of the numbers who owed to you their unexpected happiness!"

"My friend, what is the use of recalling the past?" answered Hardy mildly. "If I have acted well in the eyes of the Lord, he may perhaps let it count in my favor. It is not for me to boast. I ought rather to humble myself in the dust, for I have been, I fear, in a bad way, out of the pale of his church. Pride may perhaps have deceived me—a wretched and obscure worm—when so many great minds have submitted humbly to that church. It is in tears and solitude and mortification that I must expiate my sins; yes, in the hope that the Almighty may one day grant me forgiveness, and that my sufferings may not be unavailing for those who are still more guilty than myself."

Agricola could not find a word to answer. He gazed at M. Hardy in mute alarm as he heard him utter these puerilities in a feeble tone. The more closely he examined that desponding countenance the more he asked himself by what fascination these priests had been able to turn to account the sorrows and the moral weakness of this unfortunate man, whom they had succeeded in isolating from all the world, so as to enervate and destroy one of the most generous intellects, one of the most benevolent and enlightened minds that have ever devoted themselves to the happiness of the human race.

The surprise of the smith was so great that he felt neither the courage nor the wish to continue a discussion, only the more painful that

every word gave him some new insight into the depths of the abyss of incurable despair in which M. Hardy had been plunged by the reverend fathers.

The latter, on his side, falling back into a mournful apathy, remained silent, and his eyes wandered to the gloomy maxims on the wall.

At length Agricola drew from his pocket *Mademoiselle de Cardoville's* letter, in which he now placed his last hope, and presented it to M. Hardy, saying:

"One of your relations, sir, whom you only know by name, has charged me to deliver this letter."

"For what purpose, my friend?"

"I entreat you to read it, sir. *Mademoiselle de Cardoville* awaits your answer. Important interests are concerned."

"I have now but one interest, my friend," said M. Hardy, raising to heaven his eyes, red with weeping

"M. Hardy," resumed the smith, with growing emotion, "read this letter in the name of the gratitude we all feel, and in which we shall educate our children, who will not, like us, have the happiness of knowing you. Read this letter, and if, when you have done so, you do not change your opinion—well! what help is there? all will then be finished. We—poor workmen!—we shall have lost forever our benefactor, who treated us as brethren, loved us as friends, and set the generous example that sooner or later other good hearts would have followed, so that by degrees, thanks to you, the emancipation of the laborer would have commenced. But no matter; your memory will ever be held sacred with us, the children of the people; oh, yes! we shall never pronounce your name without respect and tenderness, for we cannot prevent ourselves from pitying you."

For some moments Agricola spoke in a broken voice. He could not finish. His emotion had reached its height. Notwithstanding the manly energy of his character, he was unable to restrain his tears, while he added:

"Forgive me if I weep. It is not for myself only; but my heart sinks within me when I think of all the tears that will be shed for a long time to come by many honest people that will say to themselves: 'We shall never see M. Hardy again—never!'"

The emotion and the tone of Agricola were so sincere—his noble and frank countenance, bathed in tears, wore such an expression of touching devotion—that for the first time since his residence with the reverend fathers the heart of Hardy was warmed within him, and it seemed to him as if a ray of the sun had penetrated the icy atmosphere in which he had so long been vegetating.

He extended his hand to Agricola, and said to him in an agitated voice:

"Thank you, my friend! This new proof of your devotion — these regrets — have filled me with a sweet emotion. It does me good!"

"Ah, sir!" cried the smith, catching the first glimpse of hope; "do not check your feelings — listen to the voice of your heart. It will tell you to make the happiness of those who love you; and it is your happiness to see others happy. Read the letter of this generous young lady. It will perhaps complete what I have begun. And if that be not sufficient —"

Here Agricola paused and glanced hopefully toward the door; then he added, as he again presented the letter to M. Hardy:

"Read it, sir, I entreat you. Mademoiselle de Cardoville desired me to confirm all that you find there."

"No, no; I must not read it," said M. Hardy, hesitating. "Why should I? to awaken my regrets? for, alas! it is true that I loved you all, and had laid many plans for your good. But why think of it? the past cannot return."

"Who knows, M. Hardy? who knows?" resumed Agricola, more and more encouraged by the hesitation of his former master. "Only read this letter from Mademoiselle de Cardoville."

Yielding at length to the entreaties of Agricola, Hardy took the letter almost against his will, opened and read it. Gradually his countenance expressed deep feelings of gratitude and admiration. He paused several times to say to Agricola, with an excitement which appeared to astonish even himself:

"How good! how beautiful!"

Having finished the perusal of the letter, M. Hardy again addressed himself to the smith, and said to him with a mournful sigh:

"What a heart is Mademoiselle de Cardoville's! what goodness! what talent! what nobleness of sentiment! Ah! I shall never forget the delicacy of her generous offers. May she at least be happy in this sad world!"

"Ah! believe me, sir," answered Agricola, with fervor; "a world which contains such creatures, and so many others, who, without all the qualities of this excellent young lady, are yet worthy of the esteem of every honest mind, cannot be altogether a mass of filth, corruption, and wickedness. And this world waits for you, calls for you. M. Hardy, listen to the counsels of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, accept the offers she makes you — return to us — return to life — for to stop in this house is death!"

"Return to the world where I suffered so much! quit this calm

retreat!" answered Hardy, hesitating; "no, no — I could not — I ought not ——"

"Oh! I have not reckoned on myself alone to persuade you," cried the smith, his hopes momentarily increasing; "I have there a powerful ally," and he pointed to the door, "whom I have reserved for the last, and who shall appear whenever you please."

"What do you mean, my friend?" asked M. Hardy.

"Oh! it was another good thought of Mademoiselle de Cardoville's. Knowing into what dangerous hands you had fallen, she said to me: 'M. Agricola, the character of M. Hardy is so good and honorable, that he may perhaps easily be deceived; for honest hearts find it hard to believe in treachery. Then he may think that you are interested in wishing him to accept the offers I make him. But there is a man whose sacred character will inspire M. Hardy with confidence; and this admirable priest is our relation, and has himself nearly fallen a victim to the implacable enemies of our family.'"

"And who is this priest?" asked M. Hardy.

"The Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont, my adopted brother," answered the smith proudly; "he is indeed a noble priest. Ah, sir! if you had known him sooner, instead of despairing, you would have been full of hope. Your grief could not have resisted his consolations."

"And where is this priest?" asked M. Hardy, with a mixture of surprise and curiosity.

"There, in the next room. When Father d'Aigrigny saw he was with me, he became furious; he ordered us to leave the house; but my brave Gabriel answered that he might have to see you on matters of importance, and that therefore he should remain. I, being less patient, gave a good push to the Abbé d'Aigrigny, who wished to prevent my passing, and came into your room at once. And now, sir, you will see Gabriel, is it not so? He would not enter without your permission. Allow me to go and fetch him. You speak of religion — his religion is the true one, for it does nothing but good; it encourages and consoles. But you shall see. Thanks to Mademoiselle de Cardoville and to him, you will yet be restored to us," cried the smith, unable to control his joy.

"My friend — I do not know — I fear," said M. Hardy, with growing hesitation, but feeling, in spite of himself, warmed and revived by the words of the smith.

The latter, profiting by the fortunate moment, ran to the door, opened it, and exclaimed:

"Gabriel! my brother — my dear brother — come! M. Hardy wishes to see thee."

"My friend," said M. Hardy, still hesitating, but not displeased to find his consent thus wrung from him, "what are you doing?"

"I am calling your deliverer and ours," answered Agricola, beside himself with joy, and already certain of Gabriel's success in dealing with M. Hardy.

Responding to the summons of the smith, Gabriel soon entered the room.

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE HIDING-PLACE



WE have said that close to the chambers occupied by the boarders of the reverend fathers sundry nooks had been constructed, to facilitate the incessant spy system carried on by the members of the Company. A secret hiding-place, capable of containing two persons, adjoined the apartment in which M. Hardy was lodged. This cabinet received air and light through a kind of chimney, and contained an acoustic apparatus so artfully constructed that not a word was lost of whatever was passing in the next room. Finally small holes had been secretly bored in different places so as to give a complete view of the apartment in question.

Father d'Aigrigny and Rodin now took their stations in this hiding-place.

Immediately after the abrupt entrance of Agricola and the firm reply of Gabriel, who declared his intention of waiting on M. Hardy if sent for, Father d'Aigrigny, not venturing to make a scene with the smith and the young missionary, but anxious to prevent the consequences of their interview with M. Hardy, had gone to consult Rodin.

The latter, during his rapid convalescence, inhabited the house reserved for the reverend fathers. He understood the extreme difficulty of their present position; and while he acknowledged that Father d'Aigrigny had punctually executed his instructions, with regard to preventing the interview between Agricola and M. Hardy,—a maneuver which had only been frustrated by the sudden arrival of the smith,—Rodin yet wished to see, hear, and judge for himself, and immediately repaired with Father d'Aigrigny to the hiding-place in question, having first dispatched a messenger to the residence of the Archbishop of Paris, for reasons hereafter to be explained.

The two reverend fathers had arrived about the middle of the conversation between Agricola and M. Hardy.

At first well pleased at the mournful apathy in which their victim appeared plunged, and from which the generous language of the smith had not been able to rouse him, the reverend fathers soon saw the danger increase and become threatening, when M. Hardy, moved by the entreaties of the artisan, consented to read the letter of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and still more when Agricola went to fetch Gabriel to give a decisive blow to the hesitations of his former master.

Thanks to the unconquerable energy of his character, which had given him the strength to support the terrible and painful operation performed by Dr. Baleinier, Rodin was no longer in any danger. Nevertheless he was frightfully emaciated. The daylight, falling from above on his yellow and shining crown, on his prominent cheek-bones and angular nose, marked these points with bright touches, while the rest of his face was covered with harsh and opaque shadows.

He looked like the living model of one of those ascetic monks of the Spanish school, in whose dark pictures one sees, beneath a brown hood, half withdrawn, a skull the color of old ivory, livid cheeks, and a hollow, sunken eye, while the rest of the face disappears in a long shadow, through which one hardly distinguishes a human form, kneeling and clad in a gown girt about with a cord.

This resemblance appeared the more striking that Rodin, descending in haste from his room, had kept on his long black worsted dressing-gown; and, being now susceptible to the cold, had thrown over his shoulders a short black cloak with a hood.

Father d'Aigrigny, not being just under the aperture that admitted the light, stood entirely enveloped in shadow.

At the moment in which we thus present the two Jesuits to the reader, Agricola had just quitted the room in search of Gabriel.

Father d'Aigrigny looked at Rodin with rage and despair, and said to him in a whisper:

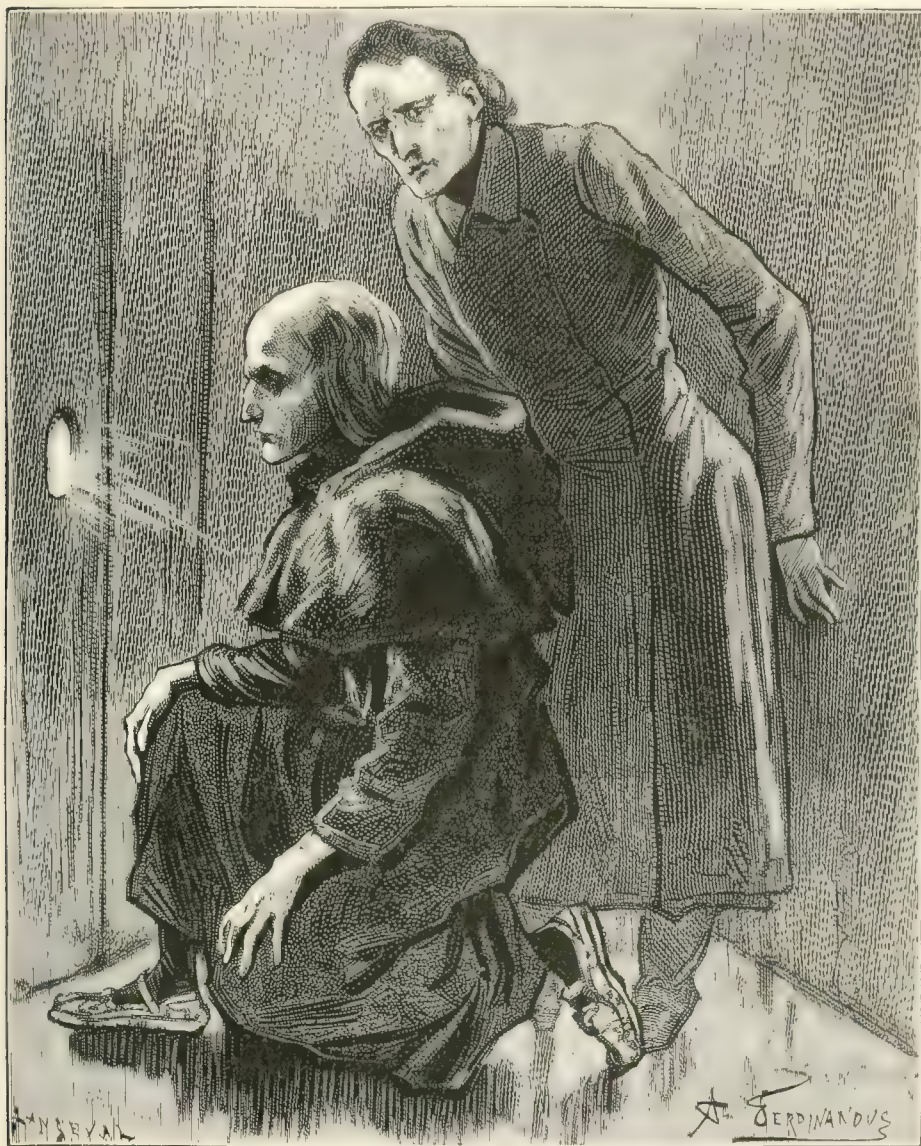
"Had it not been for Mademoiselle de Cardoville's letter, the entreaties of the smith would have been in vain. That young girl is always the accursed obstacle to all our plans. She is now united with her Indian; and if the Abbé Gabriel should complete the work, and M. Hardy also escape us, what is to be done? Ah, father! it is enough to make one despair of the future."

"No," said Rodin dryly; "if they do not delay to execute my orders at the archbishop's."

"And in that case?"

"I will answer for all. But I must have the papers within half an hour."

“They should have been ready and signed two or three days ago. I wrote on the day of the *moza*, and ——”



Instead of continuing this conversation, Rodin applied his eye to one of the holes in the wall and made a sign to Father d'Aigrigny to remain silent.

CHAPTER XXXIV

A TRUE CHRISTIAN PRIEST



At this instant Rodin had perceived Agricola reënter M. Hardy's room, leading Gabriel by the hand.

The appearance of these two young men, one with so manly and open a countenance, the other endowed with such angelic beauty, offered so striking a contrast to the hypocritical airs of the people by whom M. Hardy had lately been surrounded, that, already warmed by the hopeful words of the artisan, his heart, so long compressed, seemed to expand beneath a salutary influence.

Though Gabriel had never seen M. Hardy, he was struck with his sickly appearance. He recognized on that suffering, dejected countenance, the fatal stamp of the enervating submission, the moral annihilation, which marks the victims of the Society of Jesus, when they are not rescued in time from its murderous influence.

Rodin, with his eye close to the hole, and Father d'Aigrigny also listening attentively, did not lose a word of the following conversation, at which they were actually present, though invisible.

"Here is my good brother, sir," said Agricola to M. Hardy, as he introduced Gabriel, "the best, the most worthy of priests. Listen to him, and you will recover hope and happiness. Listen to him, and you will see him unmask the knaves that would deceive you under a false cloak of religion. Yes, yes! he will unmask them; for he also has been the victim of these wretches—is it not so, Gabriel?"

The young missionary made a sign with his hand, to moderate the excitement of the smith, and said to M. Hardy in his mild, sonorous voice:

"If, under the painful circumstances in which you at present are, sir, the counsels of a brother in Jesus Christ can be of any use to you, pray dispose of me. Let me add, that I already bear you a respectful attachment."

"How so, sir?" said M. Hardy.

"I know your goodness to my adopted brother, sir," answered Gabriel; "I know your admirable generosity to your workmen. They love and revere your name, sir. May the consciousness of their gratitude, and the conviction of having acted in conformity with the will of God, whose eternal benevolence rejoices in all that is good, be your recompense for what you have done, your encouragement in what you may still do."

"I thank you, sir," answered M. Hardy, touched by language so different from that of Father d'Aigrigny. "In my present sadness it is sweet, I confess, to hear such consolations; and the dignity of your profession," added Hardy with a pensive air, "certainly gives great weight to your words."

"That is what we had to fear," whispered Father d'Aigrigny to Rodin; "this Gabriel will do anything to rouse M. Hardy from his apathy and bring him back to active life."

"I do not fear that," answered Rodin in his abrupt tone; "M. Hardy may forget himself for a moment, and try to walk; but he will find that his legs are broken."

"What, then, does your reverence fear?"

"The delay at the archbishop's."

"But what can you hope from ——"

Rodin, whose attention was again excited, interrupted Father d'Aigrigny by a sign, and the latter remained mute.

A silence of some seconds had followed the commencement of the interview between Gabriel and M. Hardy, the latter being absorbed in reflections suggested by the language of Gabriel.

During this interval of silence, Agricola had mechanically raised his eyes to some of the mournful sentences which papered the walls of the room. Suddenly he took Gabriel by the arm and said to him with an expressive gesture:

"Ah, brother! read those maxims. Thou wilt understand it all. What man, left alone with these thoughts of despair, could refrain from falling into despondency, perhaps suicide? It is horrible; it is infamous!" added the smith indignantly; "it is a moral murder!"

"You are young, my friend," answered M. Hardy, shaking his head sadly; "you have always been happy, and have never yet been deceived. These maxims may appear false to you; but, alas! to me, and to the great majority of men, they are only too true. Here below there is nothing but pain and sorrow, for man was born to suffer. Is it not so, reverend sir?" added he, addressing himself to Gabriel.

The latter had also cast his eyes on the different maxims which the smith had just pointed out to him. The young priest could not for-

bear smiling bitterly, as he thought of the odious self-interest which had dictated this choice of sentiments. But he answered M. Hardy with a voice of emotion :

“No, no, sir ; all is not pain, and sorrow, and falsehood, and misery, and deception here below ; man was not born to suffer, for God is the supreme essence of paternal goodness, and can take no delight in the misery of his creatures, whom he made to be loving and happy even in this world.”

“Do you hear him, M. Hardy ?” cried the smith ; “he also is a priest — but a true, a sublime priest — and he does not speak like the others ——”

“Alas, sir !” said M. Hardy ; “these mournful maxims are extracted from a book which is reckoned almost divine.”

“But this book, sir,” said Gabriel, “may be made a bad use of, like every other human work. Written to keep poor monks in a state of renunciation and solitude, and in the blind obedience of a sterile and inactive life, this book — which preaches contempt for one’s self, suspicion of one’s brethren, and the most abject servility — had but the one design of persuading unfortunate monks that the tortures imposed upon them in this life — tortures in every way opposed to the eternal views of the God of humanity — were really agreeable to the Lord.”

“Ah ! this book, thus explained, appears to me still more frightful,” said M. Hardy.

“Blasphemy ! impiety !” continued Gabriel, unable to restrain his indignation. “To dare to sanctify indolence, solitude, and suspicion, when there is nothing sacred in the world but honest labor, and fraternal love, and the blessed community of all ! Sacrilege ! to say that a Father of infinite mercy rejoices in the sufferings of his children. What ! *He*, who only desires their happiness. *He*, who has magnificently endowed them with all the treasures of the creation, and bound them to *his* immortality by the immortality of their own souls !”

“Oh ! your words are beautiful and consoling,” cried M. Hardy, more and more shaken ; “but, alas ! why is there then so much misery in the world, in spite of the providential goodness of Heaven ?”

“Oh, yes ! there is much horrible misery in the world,” resumed Gabriel, with touching sadness ; “there are many poor creatures, disinherited of joy and hope, who suffer hunger and cold, and want for clothes and shelter, in the midst of the immense riches that the Creator has bestowed, not for the benefit of a few, but for the happiness of all ; for he designed all things to be divided with equity. But a few persons have possessed themselves of the common heritage, by fraud and force, and God grieves at it. Oh, yes ! if he *can* suffer at all, it is to

see that, in order to satisfy the cruel egotism of some, innumerable masses of his creatures are devoted to a deplorable fate. The oppressors of every clime and every age have dared to claim God as an accomplice, and have united to propagate in his name the horrible maxim that *man is born to suffer and that his sufferings are agreeable to Heaven*. Yes, they have propagated this maxim, so that the more humiliating and painful was the condition of their victim, and the more he shed tears and blood, the better, according to these murderers, did he serve and glorify the Lord !”

“Ah ! I understand you—I revive—I remember,” cried M. Hardy suddenly, as if roused from a dream, and with the light just dawning on his darkened intellect. “Oh, yes ! such were always my opinions, before dreadful sorrows had enfeebled my powers of mind.”

“They were then your opinions, noble heart !” cried Gabriel ; “and you did not always believe that everything here below is misery, for, thanks to you, your workmen lived happily ; nor did you think that all was deception and vanity, for every day you witnessed the gratitude of your brethren ; nor was it all tears and desolation, for you saw smiling faces around you. The creature is not then inexorably destined to sorrow, since you were enabled to make many happy. Ah, believe me ! when we enter full of love and faith into the real designs of God—of that Saviour who said, *Love one another !*—we feel and know that the great end of humanity is the happiness of all, and that man was born to be happy. Ah, my brother !” added Gabriel, moved to tears, as he pointed to the maxims surrounding the room, “this terrible book has done you much harm—this book which they had the audacity to call the *Imitation of Christ*,” added Gabriel indignantly ; “this book the imitation of Christ !—this manual of despair, which contains only thoughts of vengeance, contempt, and death, when the words of Christ were full of pardon, and peace, and hope, and love !”

“Oh ! I believe what you tell me,” cried M. Hardy, with rapture ; “I believe it ; and I have need to believe it.”

“Oh, my brother !” resumed Gabriel, with increased emotion ; “believe in a benevolent God, always merciful, always loving ! believe in a God who bestows his blessing upon labor, and who would indeed pity his children if, instead of employing his gifts for the benefit of all, they were to bury themselves in enervating and sterile despair. No, no ; God does not so will it. Rise, my brother !” added Gabriel, as he took M. Hardy cordially by the hand, and the latter obeyed the generous magnetism ; “rise, my brother ! a whole population of workmen wait for you with prayers and blessings. Quit this tomb ; come into the open air, into the bright sunshine ; exchange this mournful retreat for

an abode enlivened by the songs of labor; return to the industrious artisans of whom you are the providence. Lifted by their vigorous arms, clasped to their generous hearts, surrounded by women, little children, old men, all weeping with joy that you are restored to them, you will become once again yourself; you will acknowledge the power of the Divinity within you, for you will be able to do so much for the happiness of your brethren!"

"Gabriel, it is true! To thee and to Heaven will our little population of workmen be indebted for the return of their benefactor," cried Agricola, as he threw himself into the arms of the priest and clasped him warmly to his bosom. "Ah! I fear nothing now; M. Hardy is restored to us!"

"Yes, you are right. It is to him, to this admirable Christian priest, that I shall owe my resurrection; for here I was buried alive in a sepulcher," said M. Hardy, who had risen, and stood firm and upright, with a slight flush on his cheek and renewed brilliancy in his eye.

"Yes, you are ours!" cried the smith; "I no longer doubt of it."

"I hope so, my friend," said M. Hardy.

"You will accept the offers of Mademoiselle de Cardoville?"

"I will write to her presently on that subject; but first," added he, with a grave and solemn air, "I wish to have some conversation alone with my brother"; and he offered his hand affectionately to Gabriel. "He will permit me to call him my brother, for he is the generous apostle of brotherly love."

"Oh! I am satisfied now. As long as I leave you with him," said Agricola. "But during that time I will run to Mademoiselle de Cardoville's, to tell her this good news. But where do you wish to go, M. Hardy, when you leave this house? I must see about that."

"I will talk of it with your worthy and excellent brother," answered M. Hardy. "Go, I entreat you, and thank Mademoiselle de Cardoville for me, and tell her that this evening I shall have the honor of answering her letter."

"Ah, sir! I can hardly prevent myself from going mad with joy," said the good Agricola, pressing his hands alternately to his head and heart, in the intoxication of his delight; then returning to Gabriel, he again clasped him in his arms, and whispered:

"In an hour I shall be back; but not alone—we will come in a body—you shall see. Say nothing to M. Hardy. I have my own plan."

And the smith left the room in a tumult of delight. Gabriel and M. Hardy remained alone.

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Rodin and Father d'Aigrigny had, we know, been invisible spectators of this scene.

"Well, what does your reverence think?" said Father d'Aigrigny, with consternation.

"I think they have been too long at the archbishop's, and that this heretical missionary will ruin all," said Rodin, biting his nails to the quick.

CHAPTER XXXV

THE CONFESSOR



WHEN Agricola had left the room, M. Hardy approached Gabriel and said to him:
“Reverend sir ——”
“No, call me brother; you gave me that name, and I wish to keep it,” answered the young missionary affectionately, as he took the hand of M. Hardy.

The other cordially returned the pressure and resumed:

“Well, then, *brother!* your words have revived me, have recalled me to my duties which, in my grief, I had forgotten; may my strength not fail me in the new trial I have to go through; for, alas! you do not know all.”

“What do you mean?” answered Gabriel, with interest.

“I have a painful confession to make to you,” resumed M. Hardy, after a moment of silence and reflection. “Are you prepared to hear it?”

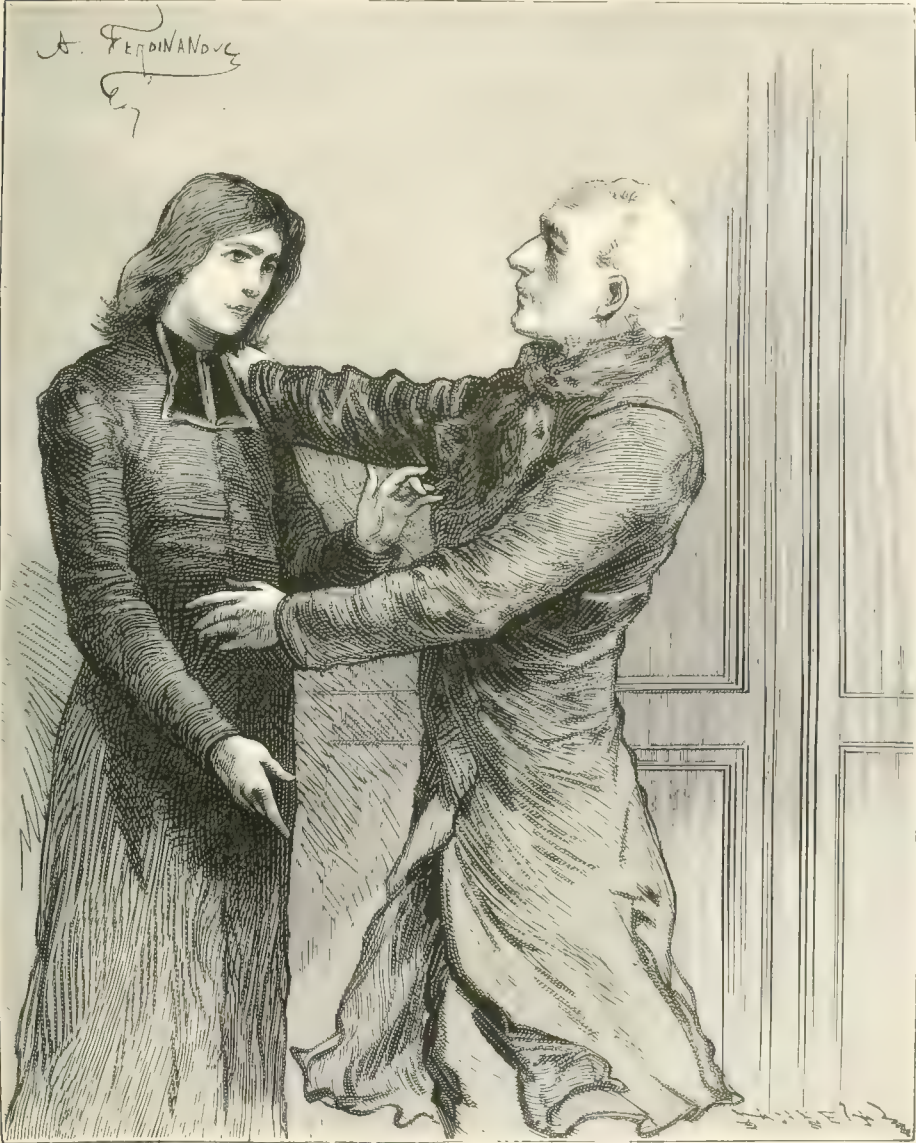
“If you choose to make me your confidant, brother,” answered Gabriel.

“Can you not hear me as a confessor?”

“As much as I am able,” replied Gabriel, “I avoid hearing *official* confessions, if I may so call them. They have, in my opinion, some very serious inconveniences. But I am happy, very happy, when I inspire sufficient confidence for a friend to open his heart to me as a friend — to say to me: ‘I suffer — console me. I doubt — advise me. I am happy — take a part in my joy! Oh! these confessions are to me the most sacred of all, and this was the meaning of the Saviour, when he bade us confess ourselves to one another. He is truly unfortunate who has not found in life one faithful and honest heart to receive such a confession. Is it not so, brother? Yet, as I submit to the laws of the Church, in conformity with vows voluntarily pronounced,” said the young priest, with a sigh, “I am ready to obey them in this, as in the rest; and if you wish it, brother, it is as a confessor that I will hear you.”

"You obey, then, laws that you do not approve," said M. Hardy, astonished at this submission.

"Brother, whatever experience may teach or discover," replied Gabriel



mournfully, "a vow freely and knowingly pronounced is binding on the conscience of the priest, as a word once pledged is binding on the man of honor. While I remain in the Church, I must submit to her discipline, however onerous I may find it."

“Onerous to you, brother?”

“Yes, to us poor country priests, or inferior ministers in towns, the humble laborers in the Lord’s vineyard; for the aristocracy which exists in the Church will often treat us with something of feudal rigor. Yet, such is the divine essence of Christianity, that it survives all the abuses which tend to impair it, and it is in the obscure ranks of the lower clergy that I can best serve the sacred cause of the oppressed and preach their emancipation with a certain degree of independence. It is for this, brother, that I remain in the Church, and therefore submit to her discipline; I tell this to you brother,” added Gabriel affectionately, “because we both preach the same doctrine. The artisans whom you have called to share the fruit of your labors are no longer oppressed. And thus do you serve the Saviour, by the good you are able to effect, far more efficaciously than I can.”

“I will continue so to serve him, provided, I repeat, I have strength sufficient.”

“And why should this strength fail you?”

“If you knew how unhappy I am! If you knew all that has fallen upon me!”

“Doubtless the ruin and destruction of your factory are deplorable events.”

“Ah, my brother!” said M. Hardy, interrupting Gabriel; “what is that? my courage would never fail me because of an accident that might be repaired with money. But, alas! there are losses which nothing can repair; there are ruins of the heart which nothing can again build up. And yet, just now, yielding to the influence of your generous words, the future, until then so dark, seemed lighted up for a moment. You encouraged and revived me by reminding me of the mission I had yet to fulfill in this world.”

“Well, brother!”

“Alas! new fears have since assailed me—when I think of returning to that life of agitation in which I have suffered so much.”

“And what is the cause of these fears?” said Gabriel, with growing interest.

“Listen to me, brother,” resumed M. Hardy. “I had concentrated all that was left me of tenderness, devotion, heart, upon two beings: a friend whom I believed sincere, and the object of a still more tender affection. The friend deceived me in an atrocious manner; the woman, after sacrificing to me her duties, had the courage, and I honor her the more for it, to sacrifice our love to the repose of her mother, and to quit France forever. Alas! I fear that these sorrows are incurable, and that they will crush me in the new path on which I have engaged to enter.

I confess my weakness—it is great—and it frightens me the more that I have no right to remain idle and in solitude so long as I can be of any service to humanity. You have enlightened me as to my duty, brother, but my fear is that, in spite of good resolutions, my strength will fail me when I find myself again in that world which henceforth must be to me a cold and cheerless desert.”

“But the honest artisans who wait to bless you will people that world for you.”

“Yes, brother,” said M. Hardy bitterly; “but, of old, to the sweet feeling of doing good were united the two affections of my life. They are gone, and have left an immense void in my heart. I reckoned on religion to supply their place. But, alas! to supply what caused me such deep regret, they only nourished my soul with the desolation of my own despair. They told me that the more I suffered the more I should deserve the favor of Heaven.”

“Be sure they deceived you, brother. It is happiness, and not misery, which, in the eyes of God, is the true end of existence. He desires to see man happy, because he would have him just and good.”

“Oh! if I had heard sooner these words of hope!” resumed M. Hardy; “my wounds might have been healed, instead of becoming incurable. I should have set myself sooner to the work you recommend; I should have found in it consolation, perhaps oblivion; while now—oh! it is horrible to confess it—grief has become so familiar, so habitual to me, that methinks it must paralyze my whole life!”

Then, as if ashamed of this relapse into despondency, M. Hardy added in a heart-rending voice, while he buried his face in his hands: “Oh! forgive, forgive my weakness. If you knew the condition of a poor creature who lived only by his affections, and has lost all at once! Does he not seek on all sides to cling to some refuge, and are not his hesitations, his fears, his impotence, more worthy of compassion than of disdain?”

There was something so touching in the humility of this avowal that Gabriel was moved by it to tears.

In these morbid fits of dejection the young missionary recognized with alarm the terrible effects of the maneuvers of the reverend fathers, so skilled to envenom and make mortal the wounds of tender and delicate souls (which they desire to isolate and lead to their own purposes) by insinuating, drop by drop, the fatal poison of the most deplorable maxims.

Knowing also that the abyss of despair has a kind of dizzy attraction to those who stand on its brink, these priests dig and enlarge the gulf around the feet of their victim till, drawn by a strange fascination,

his eye wanders incessantly down the precipice, and he at length plunges in, leaving to them the spoils of his ruin.

In vain the azure of the sky, the golden rays of the sun, are burning above him — in vain he feels that he might be saved were he to lift his eyes to Heaven; he may steal a sidelong glance at those glories, but the infernal spell is upon him, and he returns to gaze on the yawning gulf below.

Thus it was with M. Hardy. Gabriel understood all the danger of this unfortunate man's position and, collecting his utmost strength to come to his assistance, exclaimed: "Who talks of compassion or disdain, brother? Is there anything more sacred in the world, in the eyes both of God and man, than a soul which aspires to faith as a refuge from the tempest of the passions? Be comforted, my brother; your wounds are not incurable. Once out of this house, believe me, the cure will be rapid."

"Alas! how can I hope it?"

"Believe me, brother, the cure will commence when your past griefs, instead of awakening thoughts of despair, shall impart sweet consolations."

"Such thoughts give sweet consolations!" cried M. Hardy, hardly able to believe what he heard.

"Yes," replied Gabriel, smiling with angelic goodness, "for there is much sweetness, there is great consolation, in pity and forgiveness. Tell me, brother! did the sight of those who had betrayed him ever inspire the Saviour with thoughts of hatred, despair, or vengeance? No, no; he found in his heart only words of gentleness and pardon; he smiled through his tears with ineffable mercy, and then prayed for his enemies. Well! instead of suffering so bitterly from the treachery of a friend, pity him, brother; pray for him, for, of the two, you are not the most miserable. Has this faithless friend lost no treasure in your generous friendship? Who tells you that he does not repent and suffer? Alas! it is true, that if you always think of the evil occasioned by this treachery your heart will break in the pangs of incurable despair; but think rather of the beauty of forgiveness, of the sweetness of prayer, and your heart will be lightened, and your soul happy, for it will be almost divine!"

To open suddenly to this generous, delicate, and loving nature the adorable and infinite ways of pardon and prayer was to satisfy all its instincts and save it from destruction; while to chain it down to a dark and barren despondency was really to kill it, according to the hopes of the reverend fathers.

M. Hardy remained a moment as if dazzled by the view of the

radiant horizon, which for the second time had been revealed to him by the evangelical words of Gabriel.

Then, his heart palpitating with contending emotions, he exclaimed: "Oh, my brother! what sacred power dwells in your words! How can you thus change the bitter to the sweet? Peace seems to return to my soul, as I think of pardon and prayer—of prayer, which is so full of love and hope!"

"Oh! you will see," resumed Gabriel, with enthusiasm, "you will see what sweet joys await you. To pray for what we love or have loved; to take Heaven into the partnership of our affections; and then, why should the memory of this woman, whose love was so precious to you, be painful to your mind? Ah, brother! it is for you to purify that affection by prayer, so that the human love may be succeeded by the divine: the chaste love of a brother for his sister in Jesus Christ. And if this woman has been guilty in the sight of God, how sweet to pray for her! What ineffable joy to speak of her every day to the all-merciful Father, who will pardon her in compliance with your prayers; for he sees the bottom of the heart, and knows how easy it is to fall! Did not the Saviour intercede for Mary Magdalen, and for the woman taken in adultery? He did not repulse unfortunate creatures, he did not curse them; he pitied and prayed for them, *because they had loved much.*"

"Oh! I understand you," cried M. Hardy; "prayer also is love—prayer is pardon, instead of curses; hope, instead of despair. It has tears which fall upon the heart like refreshing dew, instead of tears which burn. Yes, I understand you—for you do not tell me that to suffer is to pray. No, I feel the truth of your words, that there is hope and pardon in prayer. Thanks to you, I shall now return to the world without dread."

And, with tears in his eyes, M. Hardy extended his arms to Gabriel and exclaimed:

"Ah, my brother! you save my life for the second time!"

And those two good and noble beings threw themselves into each other's arms.

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Rodin and Father d'Aigrigny had, we know, been present at this scene, though invisible. Listening with the deepest attention, Rodin had not lost a single word of the conversation.

At the moment when Gabriel and M. Hardy embraced, Rodin suddenly withdrew his reptile-eye from the hole through which he had been looking.

The countenance of the Jesuit wore an expression of diabolical joy

and triumph. Father d'Aigrigny, on the contrary, whom the conclusion of this scene had filled with consternation, could not at all understand the jubilant air of his companion, and looked at him with extreme astonishment.

"I have the *hinge*!" said Rodin abruptly, in his sharp, quick tone.

"What do you mean?" replied Father d'Aigrigny, in amazement.

"Is there a traveling-carriage here?" asked Rodin, without answering the reverend father.

The latter opened wide his eyes, and repeated mechanically:

"A traveling-carriage?"

"Yes, yes," said Rodin, with impatience; "do I talk Hebrew? Is there a traveling-carriage here? Is *that* plain?"

"Certainly — I have mine," said the reverend father.

"Then send for post-horses directly!"

"What for?"

"To remove M. Hardy."

"To remove M. Hardy!" exclaimed Father d'Aigrigny, believing that Rodin must have lost his senses.

"Yes," replied the latter; "you will take him this evening to Saint-Hérem."

"To that mournful solitude!" cried Father d'Aigrigny, thinking himself in a dream.

"Yes, yes," answered Rodin, shrugging his shoulders.

"Remove M. Hardy! — now — when Gabriel —"

"Before half an hour M. Hardy will beg me on his knees to remove him from Paris, to a desert, or to the end of the world."

"And Gabriel?"

"Have they not just brought me the letter from the archbishop's?"

"But you said it was too late."

"I had not then the *hinge*; now I have it," answered Rodin, in his sharp voice.

So saying, the two fathers hastily quitted their lurking-place.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE VISIT

IT is unnecessary to point out to the reader with what dignified reserve Gabriel had confined himself to the most generous means of rescuing Hardy from the deadly influence of the reverend fathers. It was repugnant to the great soul of the young missionary, to stoop to a revelation of the odious plots of these priests. He would only have taken this extreme course, had his powerful and sympathetic words failed to have any effect on Hardy's blindness.

"Labor, prayer, and pardon!" repeated the latter with delight, after he had strained Gabriel to his breast. "With those three words you have restored me to life and hope."

He had hardly spoken, when the door opened; a servant entered in silence, delivered a large packet to the young priest, and then withdrew.

Somewhat astonished, Gabriel took the packet, and looked at it, first mechanically; then, perceiving a particular stamp in one of the corners, he opened it hastily, and drew out a large paper folded like an official dispatch, and with a red seal hanging from it.

"Good Heaven!" cried Gabriel involuntarily, in a tone of painful emotion.

Then, addressing M. Hardy, he added:

"Your pardon, sir."

"What is it then? Have you received some bad news?" said Hardy, with interest.

"Yes, very bad," replied Gabriel dejectedly. Then he added, as if speaking to himself: "So, that was the reason of their sending for me to Paris. And they have not even deigned to hear me, but have struck the blow, without giving me the opportunity of defending myself."

After another silence, he said, with a sigh of profound resignation:

"No matter. I ought to obey, and I will obey. My vows oblige me to it."

M. Hardy looked at the young priest with a mixture of surprise and uneasiness, and said to him affectionately :

"Though my friendship and gratitude are of very recent date, can I not be of some service to you? I owe you so much that I should be happy to discharge only a small portion of my debt."

"You will have done much for me, brother, in leaving me a sweet remembrance of this day. You will render more easy my resignation to a great misfortune!"

"You have suffered a great misfortune!" said M. Hardy anxiously.

"Or rather, a painful surprise," said Gabriel; and turning away his head, he dried a tear that was stealing down his cheek, and resumed :

"But, by appealing to a good and just God, I shall not want for consolation. I feel it already, since I leave you entering on a noble and generous course. Adieu, my brother; we shall soon meet again."

"You leave me, then?"

"I must do so. First I have to learn how this letter came hither; then I must obey instantly the order contained in it. My dear Agricola will come to receive your commands; he will tell me your resolution, and where you have fixed your residence. When you wish I will come to you."

M. Hardy refrained, from delicacy, from inquiring further into the cause of Gabriel's sorrow, and said to him :

"You ask me when I wish you to come to me? Oh, to-morrow! for I leave this house to-day."

"Well, then, we meet to-morrow, brother," said Gabriel, pressing M. Hardy's hand.

The latter by an involuntary and perhaps instinctive impulse held Gabriel's hand in his own, as if he feared to release it or to let him depart.

The young priest looked with surprise at M. Hardy, who said to him with a gentle smile, as he at length relaxed his hold :

"Forgive me, brother; but you see that, thanks to all I have suffered, I have become almost like a child that is afraid to be left alone."

"And I feel quite easy about you; I leave you with consoling thoughts, with hopes that will soon be certainties. They will suffice to occupy your solitude till the arrival of my good Agricola, who cannot now be long. Once more, my brother, adieu till to-morrow!"

"Adieu till to-morrow, my dear deliverer. Oh! do not fail to come, for I shall need your kind assistance to take my first walk in the open air—I, who have been so long plunged in darkness."

"Till to-morrow, then," said Gabriel, "courage, hope, prayer!"

"Courage, hope, prayer!" said M. Hardy. "With those words one is very strong."

M. Hardy was left alone. It was strange, but the same sort of



involuntary fear which he had felt the moment Gabriel prepared to depart now returned under another form. The instant he was alone he fancied that some dark and fatal shadow had replaced the pure, mild light which attended the presence of Gabriel.

This kind of reaction was explicable enough after a day of such various emotions, particularly if we take into consideration the state of weakness, both physical and moral, to which M. Hardy had been reduced.

About a quarter of an hour had elapsed since Gabriel's departure, when the servant appointed to wait on this boarder of the reverend fathers entered and delivered to him a letter.

"From whom is this?" asked Hardy.

"From a boarder in the house, sir," answered the servant, bowing.

This man had a crafty and hypocritical face; he wore his hair combed over his forehead, spoke in a low voice, and always cast down his eyes. Waiting the answer, he joined his hands and began to twiddle his thumbs. Hardy opened the letter, and read as follows:

"SIR:

"I have only just heard, by mere chance, that you also inhabit this respectable house; a long illness and the retirement in which I live will explain my ignorance of your being so near. Though we have only met once, sir, the circumstance which led to that meeting was of so serious a nature that I cannot think you have forgotten it."

Hardy stopped and tasked his memory for an explanation, and not finding anything to put him on the right track, he continued to read:

"This circumstance excited in me a feeling of such deep and respectful sympathy for you, sir, that I cannot resist my anxious desire to wait upon you, particularly as I learn that you intend leaving this house to-day—a piece of information I have just derived from the excellent and worthy Abbé Gabriel, one of the men I most love, esteem, and reverence.

"May I venture to hope, sir, that just at the moment of quitting our common retreat to return to the world, you will deign to receive favorably the request, however intrusive, of a poor old man, whose life will henceforth be passed in solitude, and who cannot therefore have any prospect of meeting you in that vortex of society which he has abandoned forever. Waiting the honor of your answer, I beg you to accept, sir, the assurance of the sentiments of high esteem with which I remain,

"Sir,

"With the deepest respect,

"Your very humble and most obedient servant,

"RODIN."

After reading this letter and the signature of the writer, Hardy remained for some time in deep thought, without being able to recollect the name of Rodin, or to what serious circumstance he alluded.

After a silence of some duration, he said to the servant:

"M. Rodin gave you this letter?"

"Yes, sir."

"And who is M. Rodin?"

"A good old gentleman who is just recovering from a long illness, that almost carried him off. Lately he has been getting better, but he is still so weak and melancholy that it makes one sad to see him. It is a great pity, for there is not a better or more worthy gentleman in the house—unless it be you, sir," added the servant, bowing with an air of flattering respect.

"M. Rodin?" said Hardy thoughtfully. "It is singular that I should not remember the name nor any circumstance connected with it."

"If you will give me your answer, sir," resumed the servant, "I will take it to M. Rodin. He is now with Father d'Aigrigny, to whom he is bidding farewell."

"Farewell?"

"Yes, sir; the post-horses have just come."

"Post-horses for whom?" asked Hardy.

"For Father d'Aigrigny, sir."

"He is going on a journey, then!" said Hardy, with some surprise.

"Oh! he will not, I think, be long absent," said the servant, with a confidential air, "for the reverend father takes no one with him, and but very light luggage. No doubt the reverend father will come to say farewell to you, sir, before he starts. But what answer shall I give M. Rodin?"

The letter just received was couched in such polite terms—it spoke of Gabriel with so much respect—that Hardy, urged, moreover, by a natural curiosity, and seeing no motive to refuse this interview before quitting the house, said to the servant:

"Please tell M. Rodin that if he will give himself the trouble to come to me, I shall be glad to see him."

"I will let him know immediately, sir," answered the servant, bowing as he left the room.

When alone, Hardy, while wondering who this M. Rodin could be, began to make some slight preparations for his departure. For nothing in the world would he have passed another night in this house; and, in order to keep up his courage, he recalled every instant the mild, evangelical language of Gabriel, just as the superstitious recite certain litanies, with the view of escaping from temptation.

The servant soon returned, and said:

"M. Rodin is here, sir."

"Beg him to walk in."

Rodin entered, clad in his long black dressing-gown, and with his old silk cap in his hand.

The servant then withdrew.

The day was just closing. Hardy rose to meet Rodin, whose features

he did not at first distinguish. But, as the reverend father approached the window, Hardy looked narrowly at him for an instant, and then uttered an exclamation, wrung from him by surprise and painful remembrance. But, recovering himself from this first movement, Hardy said to the Jesuit, in an agitated voice :

“You here, sir? Oh, you are right! It was indeed a very serious circumstance that first brought us together.”

“Oh, my dear sir!” said Rodin, in a friendly and unctuous tone; “I was sure you would not have forgotten me.”

CHAPTER XXXVII

PRAYER

IT will doubtless be remembered that Rodin had gone, although a stranger to Hardy, to visit him at his factory and inform him of De Blessac's shameful treachery — a dreadful blow, which had only preceded by a few moments a second no less horrible misfortune; for it was in the presence of Rodin that Hardy had learned the unexpected departure of the woman he adored. Painful to him must have been the sudden appearance of Rodin. Yet, thanks to the salutary influence of Gabriel's counsels, he recovered himself by degrees, and the contraction of his features being succeeded by a melancholy calm, he said to Rodin:

"I did not indeed expect to meet you, sir, in this house."

"Alas, sir!" answered Rodin, with a sigh, "I did not expect to come hither, probably to end my days beneath this roof, when I went, without being acquainted with you, but only as one honest man should serve another, to unveil to you a great infamy."

"Indeed, sir, you then rendered me a true service; perhaps in that painful moment I did not fully express my gratitude; for at the same moment in which you revealed to me the treachery of M. de Blessac——"

"You were overwhelmed by another piece of painful intelligence," said Rodin, interrupting M. Hardy; "I shall never forget the sudden arrival of that poor woman, who, pale and affrighted, and without considering my presence, came to inform you that a person who was exceedingly dear to you had quitted Paris abruptly."

"Yes, sir; and without stopping to thank you, I set out immediately," answered Hardy, with a mournful air.

"Do you know, sir," said Rodin, after a moment's silence. "that there are sometimes very strange coincidences?"

"To what do you allude, sir?"

"While I went to inform you that you were betrayed in so infamous a manner, I was myself——"

Rodin paused, as if unable to control his deep emotion, and his countenance wore the expression of such overpowering grief that Hardy said to him, with interest :

“What ails you, sir?”

“Forgive me,” replied Rodin, with a bitter smile. “Thanks to the ghostly counsels of the angelic Abbé Gabriel, I have reached a sort of resignation. Still, there are certain memories which affect me with the most acute pain. I told you,” resumed Rodin, in a firmer voice, “or was going to tell you, that the very day after that on which I informed you of the treachery practiced against you I was myself the victim of a frightful deception. An adopted son — a poor unfortunate child whom I had brought up ——”

He paused again, drew his trembling hand over his eyes, and added :

“Pardon me, sir, for speaking of matters which must be indifferent to you. Excuse the intrusive sorrow of a poor, broken-hearted old man!”

“I have suffered too much myself, sir, to be indifferent to any kind of sorrow,” replied Hardy. “Besides, you are no stranger to me — for you did me a real service, and we both agree in our veneration for the same young priest.”

“The Abbé Gabriel!” cried Rodin, interrupting Hardy. “Ah, sir! he is my deliverer, my benefactor. If you knew all his care and devotion, during my long illness, caused by intense grief — if you knew the ineffable sweetness of his counsels ——”

“I know them, sir,” cried Hardy; “oh, yes! I know how salutary is the influence.”

“In his mouth, sir, the precepts of religion are full of mildness,” resumed Rodin, with excitement. “Do they not heal and console — do they not make us love and hope, instead of fear and tremble?”

“Alas, sir! in this very house,” said Hardy, “I have been able to make the comparison.”

“I was happy enough,” said Rodin, “to have the angelic Abbé Gabriel for my confessor, or, rather, my confidant.”

“Yes,” replied Hardy, “for he prefers confidence to confession.”

“How well you know him!” said Rodin, in a tone of the utmost simplicity. Then he resumed: “He is not a man, but an angel. His words would convert the most hardened sinner. Without being exactly impious, I had myself lived in the profession of what is called Natural Religion; but the angelic Abbé Gabriel has, by degrees, fixed my wavering belief, given it body and soul, and, in fact, endowed me with faith.”

“Yes, he is a truly Christian priest — a priest of love and pardon!” cried Hardy.

“What you say is perfectly true,” replied Rodin; “for I came here

almost mad with grief, thinking only of the unhappy boy who had repaid my paternal goodness with the most monstrous ingratitude, and sometimes I yielded to violent bursts of despair, and sometimes sank into a state of mournful dejection, cold as the grave itself. But suddenly the Abbé Gabriel appeared — and the darkness fled before the dawning of a new day.”

“You were right, sir; there are strange coincidences,” said Hardy, yielding more and more to the feeling of confidence and sympathy produced by the resemblance of his real position to Rodin’s pretended one. “And to speak frankly,” he added, “I am very glad I have seen you before quitting this house. Were I capable of falling back into fits of cowardly weakness your example alone would prevent me. Since I listen to you I feel myself stronger in the noble path which the angelic Abbé Gabriel has opened before me, as you so well express it.”

“The poor old man will not then regret having listened to the first impulse of his heart, which urged him to come to you,” said Rodin, with a touching expression. “You will sometimes remember me in that world to which you are returning?”

“Be sure of it, sir. But allow me to ask one question: You remain, you say, in this house?”

“What would you have me do? There reigns here a calm repose, and one is not disturbed in one’s prayers,” said Rodin, in a very gentle tone. “You see I have suffered so much — the conduct of that unhappy youth was so horrible — he plunged into such shocking excesses — that the wrath of Heaven must be kindled against him. Now I am very old, and it is only by passing the few days that are left me in fervent prayer that I can hope to disarm the just anger of the Lord. Oh, prayer — prayer! It was the Abbé Gabriel who revealed to me all its power and sweetness — and therewith the formidable duties it imposes.”

“Its duties are indeed great and sacred,” answered Hardy, with a pensive air.

“Do you remember the life of De Rancé?” said Rodin abruptly, as he darted a peculiar glance at Hardy.

“The founder of La Trappe?” said Hardy, surprised at Rodin’s question. “I remember hearing a very vague account, some time ago, of the motives of his conversion.”

“There is, mark you, no more striking an example of the power of prayer and of the state of almost divine ecstacy to which it may lead a religious soul. In a few words I will relate to you this instructive and tragic history. De Rancé — but I beg your pardon; I fear I am trespassing on your time.”

“No, no,” answered Hardy hastily. “You cannot think how inter-

ested I am in what you tell me. My interview with the Abbé Gabriel was abruptly broken off, and in listening to you I fancy that I hear the further development of his views. Go on, I conjure you."

"With all my heart. I only wish that the instruction which, thanks to our angelic priest, I derived from the story of De Rancé might be as profitable to you as it was to me."

"This, then, also came from the Abbé Gabriel?"

"He related to me this kind of parable in support of his exhortations," replied Rodin. "Oh, sir, do I not owe to the consoling words of that young priest all that has strengthened and revived my poor old broken heart?"

"Then I shall listen to you with a double interest."

"De Rancé was a man of the world," resumed Rodin, as he looked attentively at Hardy; "a gentleman — young, ardent, handsome. He loved a young lady of high rank. I cannot tell what impediments stood in the way of their union. But this love, though successful, was kept secret, and every evening De Rancé visited his mistress by means of a private staircase. It was, they say, one of those passionate loves which men feel but once in their lives. The mystery, even the sacrifice made by the unfortunate girl, who forgot every duty, seemed to give new charms to this guilty passion. In the silence and darkness of secrecy these two lovers passed two years of voluptuous delirium which amounted almost to ecstasy."

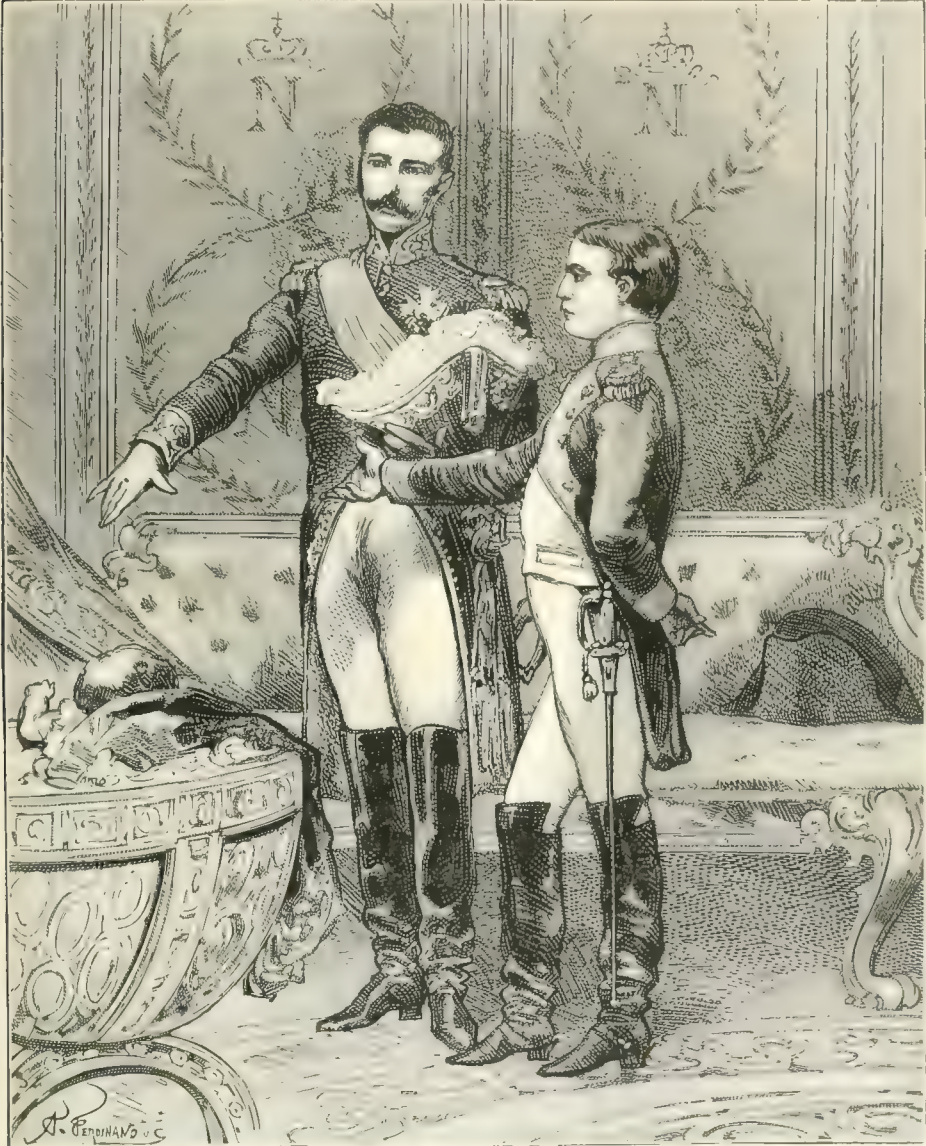
At these words Hardy started. For the first time of late his brow was suffused with a deep blush; his heart throbbed violently; he remembered that he too had once known the ardent intoxication of a guilty and hidden love.

Though the day was closing rapidly, Rodin cast a sidelong glance at Hardy and perceived the impression he had made.

"Sometimes," he continued, "thinking of the dangers to which his mistress was exposed if their connection should be discovered, De Rancé wished to sever these delicious ties; but the girl, beside herself with passion, threw herself on the neck of her lover and threatened him, in the language of intense excitement, to reveal and brave all if he thought of leaving her. Too weak and loving to resist the prayers of his mistress, De Rancé again and again yielded, and they both gave themselves up to a torrent of delight which carried them along forgetful of earth and heaven."

M. Hardy listened to Rodin with feverish and devouring avidity. The Jesuit, in painting with these almost sensual colors an ardent and secret love, revived in Hardy burning memories which till now had been drowned in tears. To the beneficent calm produced by the mild

language of Gabriel had succeeded a painful agitation, which, mingled with the reaction of the shocks received that day, began to throw his mind into a strange state of confusion.



Rodin, having so far succeeded in his object, continued as follows :
“ A fatal day came at last. De Rancé, obliged to go to the wars, quitted the girl ; but, after a short campaign, he returned, more in love than ever. He had written privately to say he would arrive almost immedi-

ately after his letter. He came accordingly. It was night. He ascended, as usual, the private staircase which led to the chamber of his mistress; he entered the room, his heart beating with love and hope. His mistress had died that morning!"

"Ah!" cried Hardy, covering his face with his hands in terror.

"She was dead," resumed Rodin. "Two wax candles were burning beside the funeral couch. De Rancé could not, would not, believe that she was dead. He threw himself on his knees by the corpse. In his delirium he seized that fair, beloved head, to cover it with kisses. The head parted from the body and remained in his hands! Yes," resumed Rodin, as Hardy drew back, pale and mute with terror, "yes, the girl had fallen a victim to so swift and extraordinary a disease that she had not been able to receive the last sacraments. After her death the doctors, in the hope of discovering the cause of this unknown malady, had begun to dissect that fair form——"

As Rodin reached this part of his narrative, night was almost come. A sort of hazy twilight alone reigned in this silent chamber, in the center of which appeared the pale and ghastly form of Rodin, clad in his long black gown, while his eyes seemed to sparkle with diabolic fire. Overcome by the violent emotions occasioned by this story, in which thoughts of death and voluptuousness, love and horror, were so strangely mingled, Hardy remained fixed and motionless, waiting for the words of Rodin with a combination of curiosity, anguish, and alarm.

"And De Rancé?" said he, at last, in an agitated voice, while he wiped the cold sweat from his brow.

"After two days of furious delirium," resumed Rodin, "he renounced the world and shut himself up in impenetrable solitude. The first period of his retreat was frightful; in his despair he uttered loud yells of grief and rage that were audible at some distance. Twice he attempted suicide, to escape from the terrible visions."

"He had visions, then?" said Hardy, with an increased agony of curiosity.

"Yes," replied Rodin, in a solemn tone, "he had fearful visions. He saw the girl who for his sake had died in mortal sin, plunged in the heat of the everlasting flames of hell! On that fair face, disfigured by infernal tortures, was stamped the despairing laugh of the damned! Her teeth gnashed with pain; her arms writhed in anguish! She wept tears of blood, and with an agonized and avenging voice she cried to her seducer: 'Thou art the cause of my perdition—my curse, my curse be upon thee!'"

As he pronounced these last words, Rodin advanced three steps

nearer to Hardy, accompanying each step with a menacing gesture. If we remember the state of weakness, trouble, and fear in which M. Hardy was — if we remember that the Jesuit had just roused in the soul of this unfortunate man all the sensual and spiritual memories of a love cooled, but not extinguished, in tears — if we remember, too, that Hardy reproached himself with the seduction of a beloved object, whom her departure from her duties might (according to the Catholic faith) doom to everlasting flames — we shall not wonder at the terrible effect of this phantasmagoria, conjured up in silence and solitude in the evening dusk by this fearful priest.

The effect on Hardy was indeed striking, and the more dangerous that the Jesuit, with diabolical craft, seemed only to be carrying out, from another point of view, the ideas of Gabriel. Had not the young priest convinced Hardy that nothing is sweeter than to ask of Heaven forgiveness for those who have sinned or whom we have led astray? But forgiveness implies punishment; and it was to the punishment alone that Rodin drew the attention of his victim, by painting it in these terrific hues. With hands clasped together and eye fixed and dilated, Hardy trembled in all his limbs, and seemed still listening to Rodin, though the latter had ceased to speak. Mechanically he repeated:

“My curse, my curse be upon thee!”

Then suddenly he exclaimed, in a kind of frenzy:

“The curse is on me also! The woman whom I taught to forget her sacred duties and to commit mortal sin — one day — plunged in the everlasting flames — her arms writhing in agony — weeping tears of blood — will cry to me from the bottomless pit: ‘My curse, my curse be upon thee!’ — One day,” he added, with redoubled terror, “one day? — who knows? perhaps at this moment! — for if the sea voyage had been fatal to her — if a shipwreck — oh, God! she too would have died in mortal sin — lost, lost forever! — Oh, have mercy on her, my God! Crush me in thy wrath, but have mercy on her — for I alone am guilty!”

And the unfortunate man, almost delirious, sank with clasped hands upon the ground.

“Sir,” cried Rodin, in an affectionate voice, as he hastened to lift him up, “my dear sir — my dear friend — be calm! Comfort yourself. I cannot bear to see you despond. Alas! my intention was quite the contrary to that.”

“The curse! the curse! yes, she will curse me also — she that I loved so much — in the everlasting flames!” murmured Hardy, shuddering, and apparently insensible to the other’s words.

“But, my dear sir, listen to me, I entreat you,” resumed the latter:

"let me finish my story, and then you will find it as consoling as it now seems terrible. For Heaven's sake, remember the adorable words of our angelic Abbé Gabriel with regard to the sweetness of prayer."

At the name of Gabriel Hardy recovered himself a little, and exclaimed in a heart-rending tone:

"Ay! his words were sweet and beneficent. Where are they now? For mercy's sake, repeat to me those consoling words."

"Our angelic Abbé Gabriel," resumed Rodin, "spoke to you of the sweetness of prayer ——"

"Oh, yes! prayer!"

"Well, my dear sir, listen to me, and you shall see how prayer saved De Rancé, and made a saint of him. Yes, these frightful torments that I have just described, these threatening visions, were all conquered by prayer and changed into celestial delights."

"I beg of you," said Hardy, in a faint voice, "speak to me of Gabriel, speak to me of heaven—but no more flames—no more hell—where sinful women weep tears of blood ——"

"No, no," replied Rodin; and even as in describing hell his tone had been harsh and threatening, it now became warm and tender as he uttered the following words: "No; we will have no more images of despair—for, as I have often told you, after suffering infernal tortures, De Rancé, thanks to the power of prayer, enjoyed the delights of paradise."

"The delights of paradise?" repeated Hardy, listening with anxious attention.

"One day, at the height of his grief, a priest, a good priest—another Abbé Gabriel—came to De Rancé. Oh, happiness! Oh, providential change! In a few days he taught the sufferer the sacred mysteries of prayer—that pious intercession of the creature, addressed to the Creator, in favor of a soul exposed to the wrath of Heaven. Then De Rancé seemed transformed. His grief was at once appeased. He prayed; and the more he prayed the greater was his hope. He felt that God listened to his prayer. Instead of trying to forget his beloved he now thought of her constantly and prayed for her salvation. Happy in his obscure cell, alone with that adored remembrance, he passed days and nights in praying for her; plunged in an ineffable burning, I had almost said amorous ecstacy."

It is impossible to give an idea of the tone of almost sensual energy with which Rodin pronounced the word "amorous." Hardy started, changing from hot to cold. For the first time his weakened mind caught a glimpse of the fatal pleasures of asceticism, and of that deplorable catalepsy described in the lives of St. Theresa, St. Aubierge, and others.

Rodin perceived the other's thoughts, and continued: "Oh! De Rancé was not now the man to content himself with a vague, passing prayer, uttered in the whirl of the world's business, which swallows it up and prevents it from reaching the ear of Heaven. No, no; in the depths of solitude he endeavored to make his prayers even more efficacious, so ardently did he desire the eternal salvation of his mistress."

"What did he do then—oh! what did he do in his solitude?" cried Hardy, who was now powerless in the hands of the Jesuit.

"First of all," said Rodin, with a slight emphasis, "he became a monk."

"A monk!" repeated Hardy, with a pensive air.

"Yes," resumed Rodin, "he became a monk, because his prayers were thus more likely to be favorably accepted. And then, as in solitude our thoughts are apt to wander, he fasted, and mortified his flesh, and brought into subjection all that was carnal within him, so that, becoming all spirit, his prayers might issue like a pure flame from his bosom and ascend like the perfume of incense to the throne of the Most High!"

"Oh! what a delicious dream!" cried Hardy, more and more under the influence of the spell; "to pray for the woman we have adored, and to become spirit—perfume—light!"

"Yes; spirit, perfume, light!" said Rodin, with emphasis. "But it is no dream. How many monks, how many hermits, like De Rancé, have, by prayers, and austerity, and macerations, attained a divine ecstasy! And if you only knew the celestial pleasures of such ecstasies! Thus, after he became a monk, the terrible dreams were succeeded by enchanting visions. Many times, after a day of fasting and a night passed in prayers and macerations, De Rancé sank down exhausted on the floor of his cell! Then the spirit freed itself from the vile clogs of matter. His senses were absorbed in pleasure; the sound of heavenly harmony struck upon his ravished ear; a bright, mild light, which was not of this world, dawned upon his half-closed eyes; and at the height of the melodious vibrations of the golden harps of the seraphim, in the center of a glory compared to which the sun is pale, the monk beheld the image of that beloved woman——"

"Whom by his prayers he had at length rescued from the eternal flames?" said Hardy in a trembling voice.

"Yes, herself," replied Rodin, with eloquent enthusiasm, for this monster was skilled in every style of speech. "Thanks to the prayers of her lover, which the Lord had granted, this woman no longer shed tears of blood—no longer writhed her beautiful arms in the convulsions of infernal anguish. No, no; still fair—oh! a thousand times fairer

than when she dwelt on earth,—fair with the everlasting beauty of angels,—she smiled on her lover with ineffable ardor, and, her eyes beaming with a mild radiance, she said to him in a tender and passionate voice: ‘Glory to the Lord! glory to thee, oh, my beloved! Thy prayers and austerities have saved me. I am numbered amongst the chosen. Thanks, my beloved, and glory!’ And therewith, radiant in her felicity, she stooped to kiss, with lips fragrant with immortality, the lips of the enraptured monk — and their souls mingled in that kiss, burning as love, chaste as divine grace, immense as eternity!”

“Oh!” cried Hardy, completely beside himself; “a whole life of prayer, fasting, torture, for such a moment — with her whom I mourn — with her whom I have perhaps led to perdition!”

“What do you say? such a moment!” cried Rodin, whose yellow forehead was bathed in sweat, like that of a magnetizer, and who now took Hardy by the hand, and drew still closer, as if to breathe into him the burning delirium; “it was not once in his religious life—it was almost every day that De Rancé, plunged in divine ecstasy, enjoyed these delicious, ineffable, superhuman pleasures, which are to the pleasures of earth what eternity is to man’s existence!”

Seeing, no doubt, that Hardy was now at the point to which he wished to bring him, and the night being almost entirely come, the reverend father coughed two or three times in a significant manner and looked toward the door. At this moment Hardy, in the height of his frenzy, exclaimed, with a supplicating voice: “A cell—a tomb—and the Ecstatic Vision!”

The door of the room opened, and Father d’Aigrigny entered, with a cloak under his arms. A servant followed him, bearing a light.

About ten minutes after this scene a dozen robust men, with frank, open countenances, led by Agricola, entered the Rue de Vaugirard and advanced joyously toward the house of the reverend fathers. It was a deputation from the former workmen of M. Hardy. They came to escort him and to congratulate him on his return amongst them. Agricola walked at their head. Suddenly he saw a carriage with post-horses issuing from the gateway of the house. The postilion whipped up the horses and they started at full gallop. Was it chance or instinct?—the nearer the carriage approached the group of which he formed a part, the more did Agricola’s heart sink within him.

The impression became so vivid that it was soon changed into a terrible apprehension; and at the moment when the vehicle, which had its blinds down, was about to pass close by him, the smith, in obedience to a resistless impulse, exclaimed as he rushed to the horses’ heads:

“Help, friends! stop them!”

“Postilion! ten louis if you ride over him!” cried from the carriage the military voice of Father d'Aigrigny.

The cholera was still raging. The postilion had heard of the murder of the poisoners. Already frightened at the sudden attack of Agricola, he struck him a heavy blow on the head with the butt of his whip, which stretched him senseless on the ground. Then, spurring with all his might, he urged his three horses into a triple gallop, and the carriage rapidly disappeared, while Agricola's companions, who had neither understood his actions nor the sense of his words, crowded around the smith and did their best to revive him.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

REMEMBRANCES



OTHER events took place a few days after the fatal evening in which M. Hardy, fascinated and misled by the deplorable, mystic jargon of Rodin, had implored Father d'Aigrigny on his knees to remove him far from Paris, into some deep solitude, where he might devote himself to a life of prayer and ascetic austerities.

Marshal Simon, since his arrival in Paris, had occupied, with his two daughters, a house in the Rue des Trois-Frères. Before introducing the reader into this modest dwelling we are obliged to recall to his memory some preceding facts. The day of the burning of Hardy's factory Marshal Simon had come to consult with his father on a question of the highest importance, and to communicate to him his painful apprehensions on the subject of the growing sadness of his twin daughters, which he was unable to explain.

Marshal Simon held in religious reverence the memory of the Great Emperor. His gratitude to the hero was boundless, his devotion blind, his enthusiasm founded upon reason, his affection warm as the most sincere and passionate friendship. But this was not all.

One day the emperor, in a burst of joy and paternal tenderness, had led the marshal to the cradle of the sleeping King of Rome, and said to him, as he proudly pointed to the beautiful child: "My old friend, swear to me that you will serve the son as you have served the father!"

Marshal Simon took and kept that vow. During the Restoration, the chief of a military conspiracy in favor of Napoleon II., he had attempted in vain to secure a regiment of cavalry at that time commanded by the Marquis d'Aigrigny. Betrayed and denounced, the marshal, after a desperate duel with the future Jesuit, had succeeded in reaching Poland and thus escaping a sentence of death. It is useless to repeat the series of events which led the marshal from Poland to

India and then brought him back to Paris after the Revolution of July—an epoch at which a number of his old comrades in arms had solicited and obtained from the government, without his knowledge,



the confirmation of the rank and title which the emperor had bestowed upon him just before Waterloo.

On his return to Paris after his long exile, in spite of all the happiness he felt in at length embracing his children, Marshal Simon was

deeply affected on learning the death of their mother, whom he adored. Till the last moment he had hoped to find her in Paris. The disappointment was dreadful, and he felt it cruelly, though he sought consolation in his children's affection.

But soon new causes of trouble and anxiety were interwoven with his life by the machinations of Rodin. Thanks to the secret intrigues of the reverend father at the Courts of Rome and Vienna, one of his emissaries, in a condition to inspire full confidence, and provided with undeniable evidence to support his words, went to Marshal Simon and said to him:

"The son of the emperor is dying, the victim of the fears with which the name of Napoleon still inspires Europe.

"From this slow death you, Marshal Simon, one of the emperor's most faithful friends, are able to rescue this unfortunate prince.

"The correspondence in my hand proves that it would be easy to open relations, of the surest and most secret nature, with one of the most influential persons about the King of Rome, and this person would be disposed to favor the prince's escape.

"It is possible, by a bold, unexpected stroke, to deliver Napoleon II. from the custody of Austria, which would leave him to perish by inches in an atmosphere that is fatal to him.

"The enterprise may be a rash one, but it has chances of success that you, Marshal Simon, more than any other, could change into certainties; for your devotion to the emperor is well known, and we remember with what adventurous audacity you conspired, in 1815, in favor of Napoleon II."

The state of languor and decline of the King of Rome was then in France a matter of public notoriety. People even went so far as to affirm that the son of the hero was carefully trained by priests, who kept him in complete ignorance of the glory of his paternal name; and that, by the most execrable machinations, they strove day by day to extinguish every noble and generous instinct that displayed itself in the unfortunate youth. The coldest hearts were touched and softened at the story of so sad and fatal a destiny.

When we remember the heroic character and chivalrous loyalty of Marshal Simon, and his passionate devotion to the emperor, we can understand how the father of Rose and Blanche was more interested than any one else in the fate of the young prince, and how, if occasion offered, he would feel himself obliged not to confine his efforts to mere regrets.

With regard to the reality of the correspondence produced by Rodin's emissary, it had been submitted by the marshal to a searching

test, by means of his intimacy with one of his old companions in arms, who had been for a long period on a mission to Vienna in the time of the Empire. The result of this investigation, conducted with as much prudence as address, so that nothing should transpire, showed that the marshal might give his serious attention to the advances made him.

Hence this proposition threw the father of Rose and Blanche into a cruel perplexity; for to attempt so bold and dangerous an enterprise he must once more abandon his children; while, on the contrary, if, alarmed at this separation, he renounced the endeavor to save the King of Rome, whose lingering death was perfectly true and well authenticated, the marshal would consider himself as false to the vow he had sworn to the emperor. To end these painful hesitations, full of confidence in the inflexible uprightness of his father's character, the marshal had gone to ask his advice; unfortunately, the old republican workman, mortally wounded during the attack on M. Hardy's factory, but still pondering over the serious communication of his son, died with these words upon his lips: "My son, you have a great duty to perform, under pain of not acting like a man of honor, and of disobeying my last will. You must, without hesitation ——"

But, by a deplorable fatality, the last words, which would have completed the sense of the old workman's thought, were spoken in so feeble a voice as to be quite unintelligible. He died, leaving Marshal Simon in a worse state of anxiety, as one of the two courses open to him had now been formally condemned by his father, in whose judgment he had the most implicit and merited confidence.

In a word, his mind was now tortured by the doubt whether his father had intended, in the name of honor and duty, to advise him not to abandon his children to engage in so hazardous an enterprise, or whether, on the contrary, he had wished him to leave them for a time, to perform the vow made to the emperor, and endeavor at least to rescue Napoleon II. from a captivity that might soon be mortal.

This perplexity, rendered more cruel by certain circumstances to be related hereafter; the tragical death of his father, who had expired in his arms; the incessant and painful remembrance of his wife, who had perished in a land of exile; and finally the grief he felt at perceiving the ever-growing sadness of Rose and Blanche, occasioned severe shocks to Marshal Simon. Let us add that, in spite of his natural intrepidity, so nobly proved by twenty years of war, the ravages of the cholera, the same terrible malady to which his wife had fallen a victim in Siberia, filled the marshal with involuntary dread. Yes, this man of iron nerves, who had coolly braved death in so many battles, felt the habitual firmness of his character give way

at sight of the scenes of desolation and mourning which Paris offered at every step.

Yet, when Mademoiselle de Cardoville gathered round her the members of her family to warn them against the plot of their enemies, the affectionate tenderness of Adrienne for Rose and Blanche appeared to exercise so happy an influence on their mysterious sorrow that the marshal, forgetting for a moment his fatal regrets, thought only of enjoying this blessed change, which, alas! was but of short duration. Having now recalled these facts to the mind of the reader, we shall continue our story.

CHAPTER XXXIX

THE BLOCKHEAD

WE have stated that Marshal Simon occupied a small house in the Rue des Trois-Frères. Two o'clock in the afternoon had just struck in the marshal's sleeping-chamber, a room furnished with military simplicity. In the recess in which stood the bed hung a trophy composed of the arms used by the marshal during his campaigns. On the secretary opposite was a small bronze bust of the emperor, the only ornament of the apartment.

Out of doors the temperature was far from warm, and the marshal had become susceptible to cold during his long residence in India. A good fire therefore blazed upon the hearth.

A door, concealed by the hangings, and leading to a back staircase, opened slowly, and a man entered the chamber. He carried a basket of wood, and advanced leisurely to the fireplace, before which he knelt down, and began to arrange the logs symmetrically in a box that stood beside the hearth. After some minutes occupied in this manner, still kneeling, he gradually approached another door, at a little distance from the chimney, and appeared to listen with deep attention, as if he wished to hear what was passing in the next room.

This man, employed as an inferior servant in the house, had the most ridiculously stupid look that can be imagined. His functions consisted in carrying wood, running errands, etc. In other respects he was a kind of laughing-stock to the other servants. In a moment of good humor Dagobert, who filled the post of major-domo, had given this idiot the name of "Loony" (lunatic), which he had retained ever since, and which he deserved in every respect, as well for his awkwardness and folly as for his unmeaning face, with its grotesquely flat nose, sloping chin, and wide, staring eyes. Add to this description a jacket of red stuff, and a triangular white apron, and we must acknowledge that the simpleton was quite worthy of his name.

Yet, at the moment when Loony listened so attentively at the door

of the adjoining room, a ray of quick intelligence animated for an instant his dull and stupid countenance.

When he had thus listened for a short time, Loony returned to the fireplace, still crawling on his knees; then rising, he again took his basket half full of wood, and once more approaching the door at which he had listened, knocked discreetly. No one answered.

He knocked a second time, and more loudly. Still there was the same silence.

Then he said, in a harsh, squeaking, laughable voice:

"Ladies, do you want any wood, if you please, for your fire?"

Receiving no answer, Loony placed his basket on the ground, opened the door gently, and entered the next room, after casting a rapid glance around. He came out again in a few seconds, looking from side to side with an anxious air, like a man who had just accomplished some important and mysterious task.

Taking up his basket, he was about to leave Marshal Simon's room, when the door of the private staircase was opened slowly and with precaution, and Dagobert appeared.

The soldier, evidently surprised at the servant's presence, knitted his brows and exclaimed abruptly:

"What are you doing here?"

At this sudden interrogation, accompanied by a growl expressive of the ill-humor of *Spoilsport*, who followed close on his master's heels, Loony uttered a cry of real or pretended terror. To give, perhaps, an appearance of greater reality to his dread, the supposed simpleton let his basket fall on the ground, as if astonishment and fear had loosened his hold of it.

"What are you doing, numbskull?" resumed Dagobert, whose countenance was impressed with deep sadness, and who seemed little disposed to laugh at the fellow's stupidity.

"Oh, M. Dagobert! how you frighten me! Dear me! what a pity I had not an armful of plates, to prove it was not my fault if I broke them all."

"I ask you what you are doing," resumed the soldier.

"You see, M. Dagobert," replied Loony, pointing to his basket, "that I came with some wood to master's room, so that he might burn it, if it was cold — which it is."

"Very well. Pick up your wood and begone!"

"Oh, M. Dagobert! my legs tremble under me. How you did scare me, to be sure!"

"Will you begone, brute?" resumed the veteran; and seizing Loony by the arm, he pushed him toward the door, while *Spoilsport*, with

recumbent ears, and hair standing up like the quills of a porcupine, seemed inclined to accelerate his retreat.

"I am going, M. Dagobert, I am going," replied the simpleton, as he hastily gathered up his basket; "only please to tell the dog ——"

"Go to the devil, you stupid chatter-box!" cried Dagobert, as he pushed Loony through the doorway.

Then the soldier bolted the door which led to the private staircase, and going to that which communicated with the apartments of the two sisters, he double-locked it. Having done this, he hastened to the alcove in which stood the bed, and taking down a pair of loaded pistols he carefully removed the percussion caps and, unable to repress a deep sigh, restored the weapons to the place in which he had found them. Then, as if on second thought, he took down an Indian dagger with a very sharp blade, and drawing it from its silver-gilt sheath proceeded to break the point of this murderous instrument by twisting it beneath one of the iron casters of the bed.

Dagobert then proceeded to unfasten the two doors, and returning slowly to the marble chimney-piece he leaned against it with a gloomy and pensive air. Crouching before the fire, *Spoilsport* followed with an attentive eye the least movement of his master. The good dog displayed a rare and intelligent sagacity. The soldier, having drawn out his handkerchief, let fall, without perceiving it, a paper containing a roll of tobacco. *Spoilsport*, who had all the qualities of a retriever of the Rutland race, took the paper between his teeth, and, rising upon his hind-legs, presented it respectfully to Dagobert. But the latter received it mechanically, and appeared indifferent to the dexterity of his dog. The grenadier's countenance revealed as much sorrow as anxiety. After remaining for some minutes near the fire, with fixed and meditative look, he began to walk about the room in great agitation, one of his hands thrust into the bosom of his long blue frock-coat, which was buttoned up to the chin, and the other into one of his hind-pockets.

From time to time he stopped abruptly, and seemed to make reply to his own thoughts, or uttered an exclamation of doubt and uneasiness; then, turning toward the trophy of arms, he shook his head mournfully and murmured:

"No matter—this fear may be idle; but he has acted so extraordinarily these two days that it is, at all events, more prudent ——"

He continued his walk, and said, after a new and prolonged silence:

"Yes, he must tell me. It makes me too uneasy. And then the poor children—it is enough to break one's heart."

And Dagobert hastily drew his mustache between his thumb and

forefinger, a nervous movement which with him was an evident symptom of extreme agitation. Some minutes after the soldier resumed, still answering his inward thoughts:

"What can it be? It is hardly possible to be the letters, they are too infamous; he despises them. And yet — But no, no — he is above that!"

And Dagobert again began to walk with hasty steps. Suddenly *Spoilsport* pricked up his ears, turned his head in the direction of the staircase-door, and growled hoarsely. A few seconds after, some one knocked at the door.

"Who is there?" said Dagobert.

There was no answer, but the person knocked again. Losing patience, the soldier went hastily to open it and saw the servant's stupid face.

"Why don't you answer when I ask who knocks!" said the soldier, angrily.

"M. Dagobert, you sent me away just now, and I was afraid of making you cross if I said I had come again."

"What do you want? Speak then — come in, stupid!" cried the exasperated Dagobert, as he pulled him into the room.

"M. Dagobert, don't be angry — I'll tell you all about it — it is a young man."

"Well?"

"He wants to speak to you directly, M. Dagobert."

"His name?"

"His name, M. Dagobert?" replied Loony, rolling about and laughing with an idiotic air.

"Yes, his name. Speak, idiot!"

"Oh, M. Dagobert, it's all in joke that you ask me his name!"

"You are determined, fool that you are, to drive me out of my senses!" cried the soldier, seizing Loony by the collar. "The name of this young man!"

"Don't be angry, M. Dagobert. I didn't tell you the name because you know it."

"Beast!" said Dagobert, shaking his fist at him.

"Yes, you do know it, M. Dagobert, for the young man is your own son. He is down-stairs, and wants to speak to you directly — yes, directly."

The stupidity was so well assumed that Dagobert was the dupe of it. Moved to compassion rather than anger by such imbecility, he looked fixedly at the servant, shrugged his shoulders, and said, as he advanced toward the staircase:

“Follow me!”

“Loony obeyed; but before closing the door he drew a letter secretly from his pocket and dropped it behind him without turning his head,



saying all the while to Dagobert, for the purpose of occupying his attention:

“Your son is in the court, M. Dagobert. He would not come up—that’s why he is still down-stairs!”

Thus talking, he closed the door, believing he had left the letter on the floor of Marshal Simon's room.

But he had reckoned without *Spoilsport*.

Whether he thought it more prudent to bring up the rear, or, from respectful deference for a biped, the worthy dog had been the last to leave the room, and, being a famous carrier, as soon as he saw the letter dropped by Loony he took it delicately between his teeth and followed close on the heels of the servant, without the latter perceiving this new proof of the intelligence and sagacity of *Spoilsport*.

CHAPTER XL

THE ANONYMOUS LETTERS

WE will explain presently what became of the letter which *Spoilsport* held between his teeth, and why he left his master when the latter ran to meet Agricola.

Dagobert had not seen his son for some days. Embracing him cordially, he led him into one of the rooms on the ground-floor which he usually occupied.

“And how is your wife?” said the soldier to his son.

“She is well, father, thank you.”

Perceiving a great change in Agricola’s countenance, Dagobert resumed: “You look sad. Has anything gone wrong since I saw you last?”

“All is over, father. We have lost him,” said the smith, in a tone of despair.

“Lost whom?”

“M. Hardy.”

“M. Hardy!—why, three days ago you told me you were going to see him.”

“Yes, father, I have seen him—and my dear brother Gabriel saw him and spoke to him—how he speaks! with a voice that comes from the heart!—and he had so revived and encouraged him that M. Hardy consented to return amongst us. Then I, wild with joy, ran to tell the good news to some of my mates, who were waiting to hear the result of my interview with M. Hardy. I brought them all with me to thank and bless him. We were within a hundred yards of the house belonging to the black-gowns——”

“Ah, the black-gowns!” said Dagobert, with a gloomy air. “Then some mischief will happen. I know them.”

“You are not mistaken, father,” answered Agricola, with a sigh. “I was running on with my comrades when I saw a carriage coming toward us. Some presentiment told me that they were taking away M. Hardy.”

"By force!" said Dagobert hastily.

"No," answered Agricola bitterly; "no—the priests are too cunning for that. They know how to make you an accomplice in the evil they do you. Shall I not always remember how they managed with my good mother?"

"Yes, the worthy woman! there was a poor fly caught in the spider's web. But this carriage of which you speak?"

"On seeing it start from the house of the black-gowns," replied Agricola, "my heart sank within me; and, by an impulse stronger than myself, I rushed to the horses' heads, calling on my comrades to help me. But the postilion knocked me down and stunned me with a blow from his whip. When I recovered my senses the carriage was already far away."

"You were not hurt?" cried Dagobert anxiously, as he examined his son from top to toe.

"No, father; a mere scratch."

"What did you next, my boy?"

"I hastened to our good angel, Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and told her all. 'You must follow M. Hardy on the instant,' said she to me. 'Take my carriage and post-horses. Dupont will accompany you; follow M. Hardy from stage to stage; should you succeed in overtaking him, your presence and your prayers may perhaps conquer the fatal influence that these priests have acquired over him.'"

"It was the best advice she could give you. That excellent young lady is always right."

"An hour after we were upon our way, for we learned by the returned postilions that M. Hardy had taken the Orleans road. We followed him as far as Étampes. There we heard that he had taken a cross-road, to reach a solitary house in a valley about four leagues from the highway. They told us that this house, called the Val-de-St. Hérem, belonged to certain priests, and that, as the night was so dark, and the road so bad, we had better sleep at the inn and start early in the morning. We followed this advice and set out at dawn. In a quarter of an hour we quitted the high road for a mountainous and desert track. We saw nothing but brown rocks and a few birch trees. As we advanced the scene became wilder and wilder. We might have fancied ourselves a hundred leagues from Paris. At last we stopped in front of a large, old, black-looking house, with only a few small windows in it, and built at the foot of a high, rocky mountain. In my whole life I have never seen anything so deserted and sad. We got out of the carriage and I rang the bell. A man opened the door. 'Did not the Abbé d'Aigrigny arrive here last night with a gentle-

man?' said I to this man, with a confidential air. 'Inform the gentleman directly that I come on business of importance, and that I must see him forthwith.' The man, believing me an accomplice, showed us in immediately; a moment after, the Abbé d'Aigrigny opened the door, saw me, and drew back; yet in five minutes more I was in presence of M. Hardy."

"Well?" said Dagobert, with interest.

Agricola shook his head sorrowfully and replied:

"I knew by the very countenance of M. Hardy that all was over. Addressing me in a mild but firm voice, he said to me: 'I understand, I can even excuse, the motives that bring you hither. But I am quite determined to live henceforth in solitude and prayer. I take this resolution freely and voluntarily, because I would fain provide for the salvation of my soul. Tell your fellows that my arrangements will be such as to leave them a good remembrance of me.' And as I was about to speak, M. Hardy interrupted me, saying: 'It is useless, my friend. My determination is unalterable. Do not write to me, for your letters will remain unanswered. Prayer will henceforth be my only occupation. Excuse me for leaving you, but I am fatigued from my journey!' He spoke the truth, for he was as pale as a specter, with a kind of wildness about the eyes, and so changed since the day before as to be hardly the same man. His hand, when he offered it on parting from me, was dry and burning. The Abbé d'Aigrigny soon came in. 'Father,' said M. Hardy to him, 'have the goodness to see M. Baudoin to the door.' So saying, he waved his hand to me in token of farewell, and retired to the next chamber. All was over; he is lost to us forever."

"Yes," said Dagobert, "those black gowns have enchanted him, like so many others."

"In despair," resumed Agricola, "I returned hither with M. Dupont. This, then, is what the priests have made of M. Hardy—of that generous man who supported nearly three hundred industrious workmen in order and happiness, increasing their knowledge, improving their hearts, and earning the benediction of that little people of which he was the providence. Instead of all this, M. Hardy is now forever reduced to a gloomy and unavailing life of contemplation."

"Oh, the black-gowns!" said Dagobert, shuddering, and unable to conceal a vague sense of fear. "The longer I live the more I am afraid of them. You have seen what those people did to your poor mother; you see what they have just done to M. Hardy; you know their plots against my two poor orphans, and against that generous young lady. Oh, these people are very powerful! I would rather face

a battalion of Russian grenadiers than a dozen of these cassocks. But don't let's talk of it. I have causes enough beside for grief and fear."

Then seeing the astonished look of Agricola, the soldier, unable to restrain his emotion, threw himself into the arms of his son, exclaiming with a choking voice:

"I can hold out no longer. My heart is too full. I must speak; and whom shall I trust if not you?"

"Father, you frighten me!" said Agricola. "What is the matter?"

"Why, you see, had it not been for you and the two poor girls, I should have blown out my brains twenty times over—rather than see what I see and dread what I do."

"What do you dread, father?"

"Since the last few days I do not know what has come over the marshal—but he frightens me."

"Yet, in his last interviews with Mademoiselle de Cardoville ——"

"Yes, he was a little better. By her kind words this generous young lady poured balm into his wounds; the presence of the young Indian cheered him; he appeared to shake off his cares, and his poor little girls felt the benefit of the change. But for some days I know not what demon has been loosed against this family. It is enough to turn one's head. First of all, I am sure that the anonymous letters have begun again."

"What letters, father?"

"The anonymous letters."

"But what are they about?"

"You know how the marshal hated that renegade, the Abbé d'Aigrigny. When he found that the traitor was here, and that he had persecuted the two orphans, even as he persecuted their mother to the death, but that now he had become a priest, I thought the marshal would have gone mad with indignation and fury. He wished to go in search of the renegade. With one word I calmed him. 'He is a priest,' I said; 'you may do what you will, insult or strike him, he will not fight. He began by serving against his country, he ends by becoming a bad priest. It is all in character. He is not worth spitting upon.' 'But surely I may punish the wrong done to my children, and avenge the death of my wife,' cried the marshal, much exasperated. 'They say, as you well know, that there are courts of law to avenge your wrongs,' answered I; 'Mademoiselle de Cardoville has lodged a charge against the renegade for having attempted to confine your daughters in a convent. We must champ the bit and wait.'"

"Yes," said Agricola mournfully, "and unfortunately there lacks proof to bring it home to the Abbé d'Aigrigny. The other day, when

I was examined by Mademoiselle de Cardoville's lawyer with regard to our attempt on the convent, he told me that we should meet with obstacles at every step for want of legal evidence, and that the priests had taken their precautions with so much skill that the indictment would be quashed."

"That is just what the marshal thinks, my boy, and this increases his irritation at such injustice."

"He should despise the wretches."

"But the anonymous letters!"

"Well, what of them, father?"

"You shall know all. A brave and honorable man like the marshal, when his first movement of indignation was over, felt that to insult the renegade disguised in the garb of a priest would be like insulting an old man or a woman. He determined, therefore, to despise him, and to forget him as soon as possible. But then, almost every day, there came by the post anonymous letters, in which all sorts of devices were employed to revive and excite the anger of the marshal against the renegade, by reminding him of all the evil contrived by the Abbé d'Aigrigny against him and his family. The marshal was reproached with cowardice for not taking vengeance on this priest, the persecutor of his wife and children, the insolent mocker at his misfortunes."

"And from whom do you suspect these letters to come, father?"

"I cannot tell—it is that which turns one's brain. They must come from the enemies of the marshal, and he has no enemies but the black-gowns."

"But, father, since these letters are to excite his anger against the Abbé d'Aigrigny, they can hardly have been written by priests."

"That is what I have said to myself."

"But what, then, can be their object?"

"Their object? Oh, it is too plain!" cried Dagobert. "The marshal is hasty, ardent; he has a thousand reasons to desire vengeance on the renegade. But he cannot do himself justice, and the other sort of justice fails him. Then what does he do? He endeavors to forget—he forgets. But every day there comes to him an insolent letter, to provoke and exasperate his legitimate hatred by mockeries and insults. Devil take me! my head is not the weakest, but at such a game I should go mad."

"Father, such a plot would be horrible, and only worthy of hell!"

"And that is not all."

"What, more?"

"The marshal has received other letters; those he has not shown me; but, after he had read the first he remained like a man struck

motionless, and murmured to himself: 'They do not even respect that; oh! it is too much—too much!' And, hiding his face in his hands, he wept."

"The marshal wept!" cried the blacksmith, hardly able to believe what he heard.

"Yes," answered Dagobert, "he wept like a child."

"And what could these letters contain, father?"

"I did not venture to ask him, he appeared so miserable and dejected."

"But, thus harassed and tormented incessantly, the marshal must lead a wretched life."

"And his poor little girls too! He sees them grow sadder and sadder, without being able to guess the cause. And the death of his father, killed almost in his arms! Perhaps you will think all this enough; but, no! I am sure there is something still more painful behind. Lately you would hardly know the marshal. He is irritable about nothing, and falls into such fits of passion that——"

After a moment's hesitation the soldier resumed:

"I may tell this to you, my poor boy. I have just been upstairs to take the caps from his pistols."

"What, father!" cried Agricola; "you fear——"

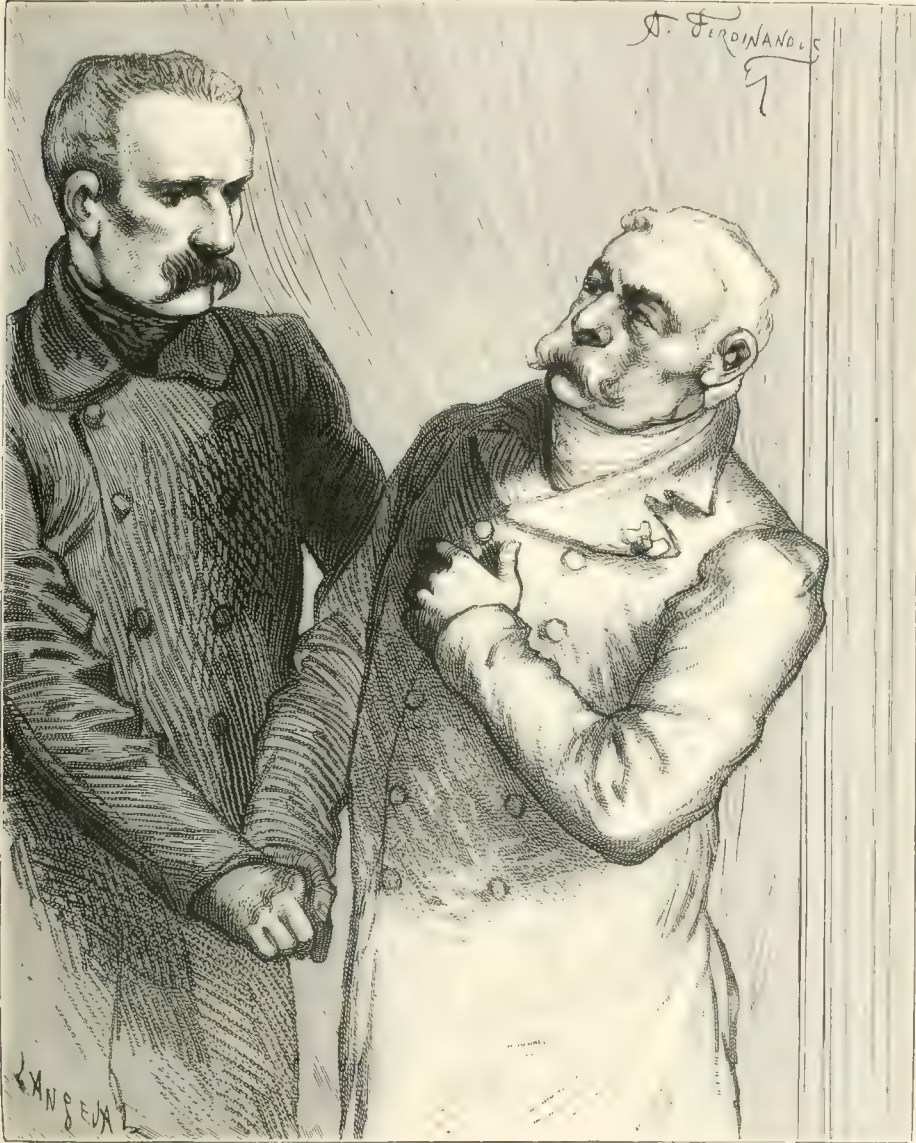
"In the state of exasperation in which I saw him yesterday, there is everything to fear."

"What then happened?"

"Since some time he has often long secret interviews with a gentleman who looks like an old soldier and a worthy man. I have remarked that the gloom and agitation of the marshal are always redoubled after one of these visits. Two or three times I have spoken to him about it; but I saw by his look that I displeased him, and therefore I desisted.

"Well, yesterday this gentleman came in the evening. He remained here till eleven o'clock, and his wife came to fetch him, and waited for him in the coach. After his departure I went up to see if the marshal wanted anything. He was very pale, but calm; he thanked me, and I came down again. You know that my room is just under his. I could hear the marshal walking about as if much agitated, and soon after he seemed to be knocking down the furniture. In alarm I once more went upstairs. He asked me with an irritated air what I wanted, and ordered me to leave the room. Seeing him in that way, I remained. He grew more angry; still I remained. Perceiving a chair and table thrown down, I pointed to them with so sad an air that he understood me. You know that he has the best heart in the world, so, taking me by the hand, he said to me: 'Forgive me for causing you this uneasiness, my good

Dagobert; but just now I lost my senses, and gave way to a burst of absurd fury; I think I should have thrown myself out of the window had it been open. I only hope that my poor dear girls have not heard



me,' added he, as he went on tip-toe to open the door which communicates with his daughters' bedroom. When he had listened anxiously for a moment he returned to me and said: 'Luckily they are asleep.' Then I asked him what was the cause of his agitation, and if, in spite

of my precautions, he had received any more anonymous letters. 'No,' replied he, with a gloomy air; 'but leave me, my friend. I am now better. It has done me good to see you. Good-night, old comrade! go downstairs to bed.' I took care not to contradict him; but, pretending to go down, I came up again and seated myself on the top stair, listening. No doubt to calm himself entirely, the marshal went to embrace his children, for I heard him open and shut their door. Then he returned to his room and walked about for a long time, but with a more quiet step. At last I heard him throw himself on his bed, and I came down about break of day. After that all remained tranquil."

"But whatever can be the matter with him, father?"

"I do not know. When I went up to him I was astonished at the agitation of his countenance and the brilliancy of his eyes. He would have looked much the same had he been delirious, or in a burning fever; so that when I heard him say he could have thrown himself out of the window had it been open, I thought it more prudent to remove the caps from his pistols."

"I cannot understand it!" said Agricola. "So firm, intrepid, and cool a man as the marshal a prey to such violence!"

"I tell you that something very extraordinary is passing within him. For two days he has not been to see his children, which is always a bad sign with him, to say nothing of the poor little angels themselves, who are miserable at the notion that they have displeased their father. They displease him! If you only knew the life they lead, dear creatures. A walk or ride with me and their companion, for I never let them go out alone, and the rest of their time at their studies, reading, or needlework—always together—and then to bed. Yet their duenna, who is, I think, a worthy woman, tells me that sometimes at night she has seen them shed tears in their sleep. Poor children, they have hitherto known but little happiness," added the soldier, with a sigh.

At this moment, hearing some one walk hastily across the courtyard, Dagobert raised his eyes, and saw Marshal Simon, with pale face and bewildered air, holding in his two hands a letter, which he seemed to read with devouring anxiety.

CHAPTER XLI

THE GOLDEN CITY



WHILE Marshal Simon was crossing the little court with so agitated an air, reading the anonymous letter which he had received by *Spoilsport's* unexpected medium, Rose and Blanche were alone together in the sitting-room they usually occupied, which had been entered for a moment by Loony during their absence. The poor children seemed destined to a succession of sorrows. At the moment their mourning for their mother drew near its close, the tragical death of their grandfather had again dressed them in funereal weeds. They were seated together upon a couch in front of their work-table.

Grief often produces the effect of years. Hence, in a few months, Rose and Blanche had become quite young women. To the infantine grace of their charming faces, formerly so plump and rosy, but now pale and thin, had succeeded an expression of grave and touching sadness. Their large, mild eyes of limpid azure, which always had a dreamy character, were now never bathed in those joyous tears with which a burst of frank and hearty laughter used of old to adorn their silky lashes, when the comic coolness of Dagobert, or some funny trick of *Spoilsport*, cheered them in the course of their long and weary pilgrimage.

In a word, those delightful faces, which the flowery pencil of Greuze could alone have painted in all their velvet freshness, were now worthy of inspiring the melancholy ideal of the immortal Ary Scheffer, who gave us Mignon aspiring to Paradise, and Margaret dreaming of Faust.

Rose, leaning back on the couch, held her head somewhat bowed upon her bosom, over which was crossed a handkerchief of black crape. The light streaming from a window opposite shone softly on her pure, white forehead, crowned by two thick bands of chestnut hair. Her

look was fixed, and the open arch of her eyebrows, now somewhat contracted, announced a mind occupied with painful thoughts. Her thin, white little hands had fallen upon her knees, but still held the embroidery on which she had been engaged.

The profile of Blanche was visible, leaning a little toward her sister with an expression of tender and anxious solicitude, while her needle remained in the canvas, as if she had just ceased to work.

"Sister," said Blanche, in a low voice, after some moments of silence, during which the tears seemed to mount to her eyes, "tell me what you are thinking of. You look so sad."

"I think of the Golden City of our dreams," replied Rose, almost in a whisper, after another short silence.

Blanche understood the bitterness of these words. Without speaking, she threw herself on her sister's neck and wept.

Poor girls, the Golden City of their dreams was Paris, with their father in it — Paris, the marvelous city of joys and festivals, through all of which the orphans had beheld the radiant and smiling countenance of their sire!

But, alas! the beautiful city had been changed into a place of tears and death and mourning. The same terrible pestilence which had struck down their mother in the heart of Siberia seemed to have followed them like a dark and fatal cloud which, always hovering above them, hid the mild blue of the sky and the joyous light of the sun.

The Golden City of their dreams! It was the place where perhaps one day their father would present to them two young lovers, good and fair as themselves. "They love you," he was to say; "they are worthy of you. Let each of you have a brother, and me two sons." Then what chaste, enchanting confusion for those two orphans, whose hearts, pure as crystal, had never reflected any image but that of Gabriel, the celestial messenger sent by their mother to protect them!

We can therefore understand the painful emotion of Blanche, when she heard her sister repeat, with bitter melancholy, those words which described their whole situation: "I think of the Golden City of our dreams!"

"Who knows?" proceeded Blanche, drying her sister's tears; "perhaps happiness may yet be in store for us."

"Alas! if we are not happy with our father by us — shall we ever be so!"

"Yes, when we rejoin our mother," said Blanche, lifting her eyes to heaven.

"Then, sister, this dream may be a warning — it is so like that we had in Germany."

"The difference being that then the Angel Gabriel came down from heaven to us, and that this time he takes us from earth to our mother."

"And this dream will perhaps come true, like the other, my sister. We dreamt that the Angel Gabriel would protect us, and he came to save us from the shipwreck."

"And this time we dream that he will lead us to heaven. Why should not that happen also?"

"But to bring that about, sister, our Gabriel, who saved us from the shipwreck, must die also. No, no; that must not happen. Let us pray that it may not happen."

"No, it will not happen—for it is only Gabriel's good angel, who is so like him, that we saw in our dream."

"Sister, dear, how singular is this dream! Here, as in Germany, we have both dreamt the same—three times the very same!"

"It is true. The Angel Gabriel bent over us and looked at us with so mild and sad an air, saying: 'Come, my children! come, my sisters! Your mother waits for you. Poor children, arrived from so far!' added he in his tender voice. 'You have passed over the earth, gentle and innocent as two doves, to repose forever in the maternal nest.'"

"Yes, those were the words of the archangel," said the other orphan, with a pensive air; "we have done no harm to any one, and we have loved those who loved us—why should we fear to die?"

"Therefore, dear sister, we rather smiled than wept when he took us by the hand and, spreading wide his beautiful white wings, carried us along with him to the blue depths of the sky."

"To heaven, where our dear mother waited for us with open arms, her face all bathed in tears."

"Oh, sweet sister! one has not dreams like ours for nothing. And then," added she, looking at Rose with a sad smile that went to the heart, "our death might perhaps end the sorrow of which we have been the cause."

"Alas! it is not our fault. We love him so much. But we are so timid and sorrowful before him that he may perhaps think we love him not."

So saying, Rose took her handkerchief from her work-basket to dry her tears; a paper, folded in the form of a letter, fell out."

At this sight the two shuddered and pressed close to each other, and Rose said to Blanche in a trembling voice:

"Another of these letters! Oh, I am afraid! It will doubtless be like the last."

"We must pick it up quickly, that it may not be seen," said Blanche,

hastily stooping to seize the letter; "the people who take interest in us might otherwise be exposed to great danger."

"But how could this letter come to us?"

"How did the others come to be placed right under our hand, and always in the absence of our governess?"

"It is true. Why seek to explain the mystery? We should never be able to do so. Let us read the letter. It will perhaps be more favorable to us than the last." And the two sisters read as follows:

"Continue to love your father, dear children, for he is very miserable, and you are the involuntary cause of his distress. You will never know the terrible sacrifices that your presence imposes on him; but, alas! he is the victim of his paternal duties. His sufferings are more cruel than ever; spare him at least those marks of tenderness which occasion him so much more pain than pleasure. Each caress is a dagger-stroke, for he sees in you the innocent cause of his misfortunes. Dear children, you must not therefore despair. If you have enough command over yourselves not to torture him by the display of too warm a tenderness, if you can mingle some reserve with your affection, you will greatly alleviate his sorrow. Keep these letters a secret from every one, even from good Dagobert, who loves you so much; otherwise, both he and you, your father, and the unknown friend who is writing to you, will be exposed to the utmost peril, for your enemies are indeed formidable.

"Courage and hope! May your father's tenderness be once more free from sorrow and regret! That happy day is perhaps not so far distant.

"Burn this letter like all the others!"

The above note was written with so much cunning that, even supposing the orphans had communicated it to their father or Dagobert, it would at the worst have been considered a strange, intrusive proceeding, but almost excusable from the spirit in which it was conceived. Nothing could have been contrived with more perfidious art, if we consider the cruel perplexity in which Marshal Simon was struggling between the fear of again leaving his children and the shame of neglecting what he considered a sacred duty. All the tenderness, all the susceptibility of heart which distinguished the orphans had been called into play by these diabolical counsels, and the sisters soon perceived that their presence was in fact both sweet and painful to their father; for sometimes he felt himself incapable of leaving them, and sometimes the thought of a neglected duty spread a cloud of sadness over his brow. Hence the poor twins could not fail to value the fatal meaning of the anonymous letters they received. They were persuaded that, from some mysterious motive, which they were unable to penetrate, their presence was often importunate and even painful to their father. Hence the growing sadness of Rose and Blanche—hence the sort of fear and reserve which restrained the expression of their filial tenderness. A most painful situation for the marshal, who,

deceived by inexplicable appearances, mistook, in his turn, their manner for indifference to him—and so, with breaking heart, and bitter grief upon his face, often abruptly quitted his children to conceal his tears!

And the desponding orphans said to each other:

“We are the cause of our father’s grief. It is our presence which makes him so unhappy.”

The reader may now judge what ravages such a thought, when fixed and incessant, must have made on these young, loving, timid and simple hearts. How could the orphans be on their guard against such anonymous communications, which spoke with reverence of all they loved, and seemed every day justified by the conduct of their father? Already victims of numerous plots, and hearing that they were surrounded by enemies, we can understand how, faithful to the advice of their unknown friend, they forbore to confide to Dagobert these letters, in which he was so justly appreciated.

The object of the proceeding was very plain. By continually harassing the marshal on all sides, and persuading him of the coldness of his children, the conspirators might naturally hope to conquer the hesitation which had hitherto prevented his again quitting his daughters to embark in a dangerous enterprise. To render the marshal’s life so burdensome that he would desire to seek relief from his torments in any project of daring and generous chivalry, was one of the ends proposed by Rodin—and, as we have seen, it wanted neither logic nor possibility.

After having read the letter, the two remained for a moment silent and dejected. Then Rose, who held the paper in her hand, started up suddenly, approached the chimney-piece, and threw the letter into the fire, saying, with a timid air:

“We must burn it quickly, or perhaps some great danger will ensue.”

“What greater misfortune can happen to us,” said Blanche despondingly, “than to cause such sorrow to our father? What can be the reason of it?”

“Perhaps,” said Rose, whose tears were slowly trickling down her cheek, “he does not find us what he could have desired. He may love us well as the children of our poor mother, but we are not the daughters he had dreamed of. Do you understand me, sister?”

“Yes, yes; that is perhaps what occasions all his sorrow. We are so badly informed, so wild, so awkward, that he is no doubt ashamed of us; and, as he loves us in spite of all, it makes him suffer.”

"Alas, it is not our fault. Our dear mother brought us up in the deserts of Siberia as well as she could."

"Oh! father himself does not reproach us with it; only it gives him pain."

"Particularly if he has friends whose daughters are very beautiful, and possessed of all sorts of talents. Then he must bitterly regret that we are not the same."

"Dost remember when he took us to see our cousin, Mademoiselle Adrienne, who was so affectionate and kind to us, that he said to us, with admiration: 'Did you notice her, my children? How beautiful she is, and what talent, what a noble heart, and therewith such grace and elegance!'"

"Oh, it is very true! Mademoiselle de Cardoville is so beautiful, her voice is so sweet and gentle that when we saw and heard her we fancied that all our troubles were at an end."

"And it is because of such beauty, no doubt, that our father, comparing us with our cousin and so many other handsome young ladies, cannot be very proud of us. And he, who is so loved and honored, would have liked to have been proud of his daughters."

Suddenly Rose laid her hand on her sister's arm, and said to her with anxiety:

"Listen! listen! they are talking very loud in father's bedroom."

"Yes," said Blanche, listening in her turn; "and I can hear him walking. That is his step."

"Good Heaven! how he raises his voice; he seems to be in a great passion; he will perhaps come this way."

And at the thought of their father's coming — that father who really adored them — the unhappy children looked in terror at each other. The sound of a loud and angry voice became more and more distinct; and Rose, trembling through all her frame, said to her sister:

"Do not let us remain here! Come into our room."

"Why?"

"We should hear, without designing it, the words of our father — and he does not perhaps know that we are so near."

"You are right. Come, come!" answered Blanche, as she rose hastily from her seat.

"Oh! I am afraid. I have never heard him speak in so angry a tone."

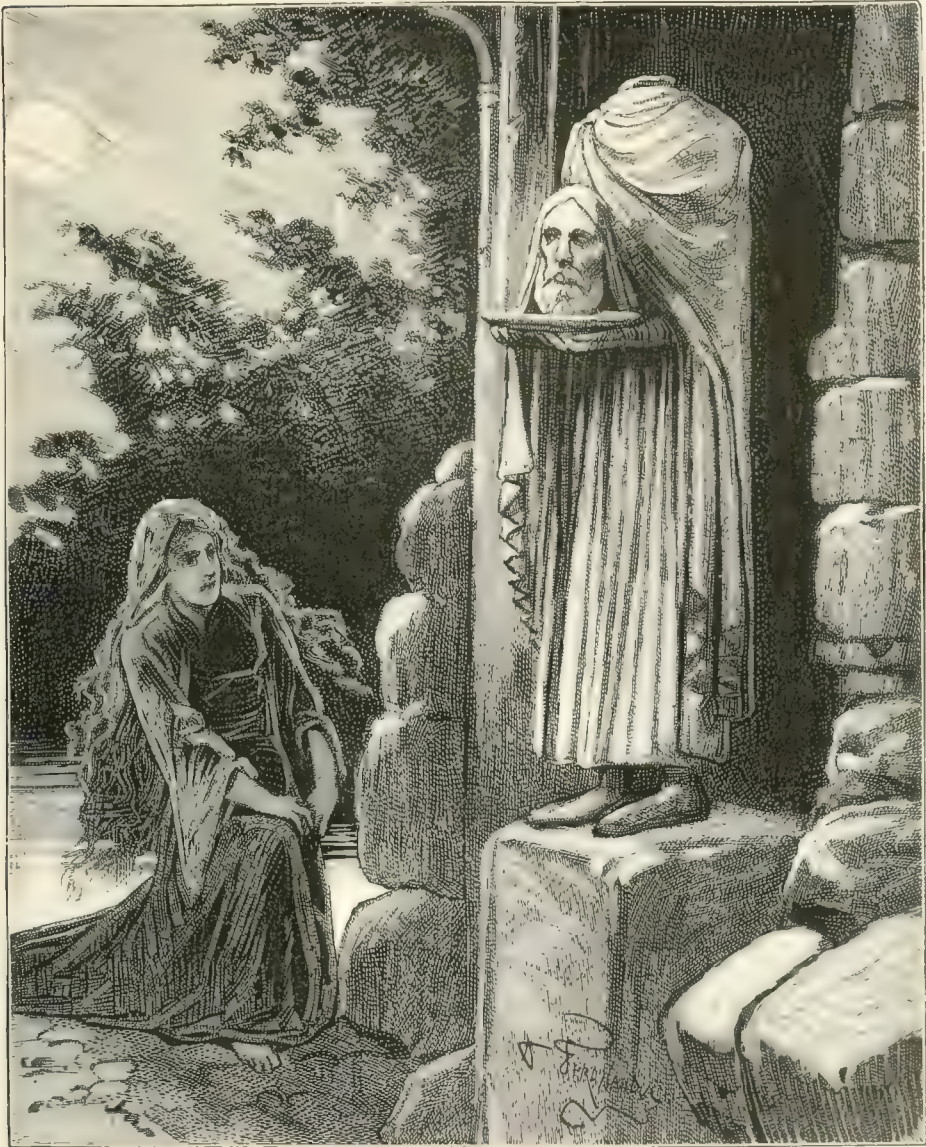
"Oh! kind Heaven!" said Blanche, growing pale, as she stopped involuntarily. "It is to Dagobert that he is talking so loud."

"What can be the matter — to make our father speak to him in that way?"

"Alas! some great misfortune must have happened."

“Oh, sister! do not let us remain here! It pains me too much to hear Dagobert thus spoken to.”

The crash of some article hurled with violence and broken to pieces



in the next room so frightened the orphans that, pale and trembling with emotion, they rushed into their own apartment and fastened the door. We must now explain the cause of Marshal Simon's violent anger.

CHAPTER XLII

THE STUNG LION

THIS was the scene the sound of which had so terrified Rose and Blanche. At first alone in his chamber, in a state of exasperation difficult to describe, Marshal Simon had begun to walk hastily up and down, his handsome, manly face inflamed with rage, his eyes sparkling with indignation, while on his broad forehead, crowned with short-cut hair that was now turning gray, large veins, of which you might count the pulsations, were swollen almost to bursting; and sometimes his thick, black mustache was curled with a convulsive motion, not unlike that which is seen on the visage of a raging lion. And even as the wounded lion, in its fury, harassed and tortured by a thousand invisible darts, walks up and down its den with savage wrath, so Marshal Simon paced the floor of his room, as if bounding from side to side. Sometimes he stooped, as though bending beneath the weight of his anger; sometimes, on the contrary, he paused abruptly, drew himself up to his full height, crossed his arms upon his vigorous chest, and with raised brow, threatening and terrible look, seemed to defy some invisible enemy and murmur confused exclamations. Then he stood like a man of war and battle in all his intrepid fire.

And now he stamped angrily with his foot, approached the chimney-piece, and pulled the bell so violently that the bell-rope remained in his hand. A servant hastened to attend to this precipitate summons.

"Did you not tell Dagobert that I wished to speak to him?" cried the marshal.

"I executed your grace's orders, but M. Dagobert was accompanying his son to the door and ——"

"Very well!" interrupted Marshal Simon, with an abrupt and imperious gesture.

The servant went out, and his master continued to walk up and down with impatient steps, crumpling, in his rage, a letter that he held in his left hand. This letter had been innocently delivered by *Spoilsport*, who, seeing him come in, had run joyously to meet him.

At length the door opened, and Dagobert appeared.

"I have been waiting for you a long time, sir!" cried the marshal, in an irritated tone.

Dagobert, more pained than surprised at this burst of anger, which he rightly attributed to the constant state of excitement in which the marshal had now been for some time past, answered mildly:

"I beg your pardon, general, but I was letting out my son ——"

"Read that, sir!" said the marshal abruptly, giving him the letter.

While Dagobert was reading it the marshal resumed, with growing anger, as he kicked over a chair that stood in his way:

"Thus, even in my own house, there are wretches bribed to harass me with incredible perseverance. Well! have you read it, sir?"

"It is a fresh insult to add to the others," said Dagobert coolly, as he threw the letter into the fire.

"The letter is infamous—but it speaks the truth," replied the marshal.

Dagobert looked at him in amazement.

"And can you tell who brought me this infamous letter?" continued the marshal. "One would think the devil had a hand in it—for it was your dog!"

"*Spoilsport*?" said Dagobert, in the utmost surprise.

"Yes," answered the marshal bitterly; "it is no doubt a joke of your invention."

"I have no heart for joking, general," answered Dagobert, more and more saddened by the irritable state of the marshal; "I cannot explain how it happened. *Spoilsport* is a good carrier, and no doubt found the letter in the house ——"

"And who can have left it there? Am I surrounded by traitors? Do you keep no watch? You, in whom I have every confidence?"

"Listen to me, general ——"

But the marshal proceeded, without waiting to hear him:

"What! I have made war for five-and-twenty years, I have battled with armies, I have struggled victoriously through the evil times of exile and proscription, I have withstood blows from maces of iron—and now I am to be killed with pins! Pursued into my own house, harassed with impunity, worn out, tortured every minute, to gratify some unknown, miserable hate!—When I say unknown, I am wrong—it is D'Aigrigny, the renegade, who is at the bottom of all this, I am sure. I have in the world but one enemy, and he is the man. I must finish with him, for I am weary of this—it is too much!"

"But, general, remember he is a priest——"

"What do I care for that? Have I not seen him handle the sword? I will yet make a soldier's blood rise to the forehead of the traitor!"

"But, general ——"

"I tell you that I must be avenged on some one," cried the marshal, with an accent of the most violent exasperation; "I tell you that I must find a living representative of these cowardly plots, that I may at once make an end of him! They press upon me from all sides; they make my life a hell—you know it, and you do nothing to save me from these tortures, which are killing me as by a slow fire. Can I have no one in whom to trust?"

"General, I can't let you say that," replied Dagobert, in a calm but firm voice.

"And why not?"

"General, I can't let you say that you have no one to trust to. You might end perhaps in believing it, and then it would be even worse for yourself than for those who well know their devotion for you, and would go through fire and water to serve you. I am one of them, and you know it."

These simple words, pronounced by Dagobert with a tone of deep conviction, recalled the marshal to himself; for although his honorable and generous character might from time to time be embittered by irritation and grief, he soon recovered his natural equanimity. So addressing Dagobert in a less abrupt tone, he said to him, though still much agitated:

"You are right. I could never doubt your fidelity. But anger deprives me of my senses. This infamous letter is enough to drive one mad. I am unjust, ungrateful—yes, ungrateful—and to you!"

"Do not think of me, general. With a kind word at the end, you might blow me up all the year round. But what has happened?"

The general's countenance again darkened as he answered rapidly:

"I am looked down upon and despised!"

"You?"

"Yes, I. After all," resumed the marshal bitterly, "why should I conceal from you this low wound? If I doubted you a moment, I owe you some compensation, and you shall know all. For some time past I have perceived that when I meet any of my old companions in arms they try to avoid me——"

"What! was it to this that the anonymous letter alluded?"

"Yes; and it spoke the truth," replied the marshal, with a sigh of grief and indignation.

"But it is impossible, general—you are so loved and respected——"

"Those are mere words; I speak of positive facts. When I appear the conversation is often interrupted. Instead of treating me as an old comrade, they affect toward me a rigorously cold politeness. There are

a thousand little shades, a thousand trifles, which wound the heart, but which it is impossible to notice ——”

“What you are now saying, general, quite confounds me,” replied Dagobert. “You assure me of it, and I am forced to believe you.”

“Oh, it is intolerable! I was resolved to ease my heart of it; so this morning I went to General d’Havrincourt, who was colonel with me in the Imperial Guard; he is honor and honesty itself. I went to him with open heart. ‘I perceive,’ said I, ‘the coldness that is shown me. Some calumny must be circulating to my disadvantage. Tell me all about it. Knowing the attack, I shall be able to defend myself’——”

“Well, general?”

“D’Havrincourt remained impassible, ceremoniously polite. To all my questions he answered coldly: ‘I am not aware, marshal, that any calumny has been circulated with regard to you.’ ‘Do not call me “marshal,” my dear D’Havrincourt; we are old fellow-soldiers and friends; my honor is somewhat touchy, I confess, and I find that you and our comrades do not receive me so cordially as in times past. You do not deny it; I see, I know, I feel it.’ To all this D’Havrincourt answered, with the same coldness: ‘I have never seen any one wanting in respect toward you.’——‘I am not talking of respect,’ exclaimed I, as I clasped his hand affectionately, though I observed that he but feebly returned the pressure; ‘I speak of cordiality, confidence, which I once enjoyed, while now I am treated like a stranger. Why is it? What has occasioned this change?’ Still cold and reserved, he answered: ‘These distinctions are so nice, marshal, that it is impossible for me to give you any opinion on the subject.’ My heart swelled with grief and anger. What was I to do? To quarrel with D’Havrincourt would have been absurd. A sense of dignity forced me to break off the interview, but it has only confirmed my fears. Thus,” added the marshal, getting more and more animated, “thus am I fallen from the esteem to which I am entitled, thus am I despised, without even knowing the cause! Is it not odious? If they would only utter a charge against me, I should at least be able to defend myself, and to find an answer. But no, no! not even a word——only the cold politeness that is worse than any insult. Oh! it is too much, too much! for all this comes but in addition to other cares. What a life is mine, since the death of my father! If I did but find rest and happiness at home——but no! I come in but to read shameful letters; and still worse,” added the marshal, in a heart-rending tone and after a moment’s hesitation, “to find my children grow more and more indifferent toward me. Yes,” continued he, perceiving the amazement of Dagobert, “and yet they know how much I love them!”

"Your daughters indifferent!" exclaimed Dagobert, in astonishment. "You make them such a reproach?"

"Oh! I do not blame them. They have hardly had time to know me."

"Not had time to know you?" returned the soldier, in a tone of remonstrance, and warming up in his turn. "Ah! of what did their mother talk to them, except you? And I too! what could I teach your children except to know and love you?"

"You take their part—that is natural; they love you better than they do me," said the marshal, with growing bitterness.

Dagobert felt himself so painfully affected that he looked at the marshal without answering.

"Yes," continued the other; "yes! it may be base and ungrateful—but no matter! Twenty times I have felt jealous of the affectionate confidence which my children display toward you, while with me they seem always to be in fear. If their melancholy faces ever grow animated for a moment, it is in talking to you, in seeing you; while for me they have nothing but cold respect, and that kills me. Sure of the affection of my children, I would have braved and surmounted every difficulty——"

Then, seeing that Dagobert rushed toward the door which led to the chamber of Rose and Blanche, the marshal asked:

"Where are you going?"

"For your daughters, general."

"What for?"

"To bring them face to face with you—to tell them: 'My children, your father thinks that you do not love him.' I will only say that, and then you will see."

"Dagobert! I forbid you to do it," cried the marshal hastily.

"I don't care for that! You have no right to be unjust to the poor children," said the soldier, as he again advanced toward the door.

"Dagobert, I command you to remain here," cried the marshal.

"Listen to me, general. I am your soldier, your inferior, your servant, if you will," said the old grenadier roughly; "but neither rank nor station shall keep me silent, when I have to defend your daughters. All must be explained. I know but one way, and that is to bring honest people face to face."

If the marshal had not seized him by the arm, Dagobert would have entered the apartment of the young girls.

"Remain!" said the marshal, so imperiously that the soldier, accustomed to obedience, hung his head and stood still.

"What would you do?" resumed the marshal. "Tell my children

that I think they do not love me? induce them to affect a tenderness they do not feel — when it is not their fault, but mine?”

“Oh, general!” said Dagobert, in a tone of despair, “I no longer feel anger in hearing you speak thus of your children. It is such grief that it breaks my heart!”

Touched by the expression of the soldier's countenance, the marshal continued less abruptly:

“Come, I may be wrong; and yet I ask you, without bitterness or jealousy, are not my children more confiding, more familiar, with you than with me?”

“God bless me, general!” cried Dagobert; “if you come to that, they are more familiar with *Spoilspart* than with either of us. You are their father; and, however kind a father may be, he must always command some respect. Familiar with me! I should think so. A fine story! What the devil should they respect in me, who, except that I am six feet high and wear a mustache, might pass for the old woman that nursed them? And then I must say that even before the death of your worthy father you were sad and full of thought; the children have remarked that, and what you take for coldness on their part is, I am sure, anxiety for you. Come, general; you are not just. You complain because they love you too much.”

“I complain because I suffer,” said the marshal, in an agony of excitement. “I alone know my sufferings.”

“They must indeed be grievous, general,” said Dagobert, carried farther than he would otherwise have gone by his attachment for the orphans, “since those who love you feel them so cruelly.”

“What, sir! more reproaches?”

“Yes, general, reproaches,” cried Dagobert. “Your children have the right to complain of you, since you accuse them so unjustly.”

“Sir,” said the marshal, scarcely able to contain himself; “this is enough — this is too much!”

“Oh, yes! it is enough,” replied Dagobert, with rising emotion. “Why defend unfortunate children, who can only love and submit? Why defend them against your unhappy blindness?”

The marshal started with anger and impatience, but then replied with a forced calmness:

“I needs must remember all that I owe you — and I will not forget it, say what you will.”

“But, general,” cried Dagobert, “why will you not let me fetch your children?”

“Do you not see that this scene is killing me?” cried the exasperated marshal. “Do you not understand that I will not have my children

witness what I suffer? A father's grief has its dignity, sir; and you ought to feel for and respect it."

"Respect it? no — not when it is founded on injustice!"

"Enough, sir — enough!"

"And not content with tormenting yourself," cried Dagobert, unable any longer to control his feelings, "do you know what you will do? You will make your children die of sorrow. Was it for this that I brought them to you from the depths of Siberia?"

"More reproaches!"

"Yes; for the worst ingratitude toward me is to make your children unhappy."

"Leave the room, sir!" cried the marshal, quite beside himself, and so terrible with rage and grief that Dagobert, regretting that he had gone so far, resumed:

"I was wrong, general. I have perhaps been wanting in respect to you — forgive me — but —"

"I forgive you — only leave me!" said the marshal, hardly restraining himself.

"One word, general —"

"I entreat you to leave me; I ask it as a service; is that enough?" said the marshal, with renewed efforts to control the violence of his emotions.

A deadly paleness succeeded to the high color which during this painful scene had inflamed the cheeks of the marshal. Alarmed at this symptom, Dagobert redoubled his entreaties.

"I implore you, general," said he, in an agitated voice, "to permit me for one moment —"

"Since you will have it so, sir, I must be the one to leave," said the marshal, making a step toward the door.

These words were said in such a manner that Dagobert could no longer resist. He hung his head in despair, looked for a moment in silent supplication at the marshal, and then, as the latter seemed yielding to a new movement of rage, the soldier slowly quitted the room.

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A few minutes had scarcely elapsed since the departure of Dagobert, when the marshal, who, after a long and gloomy silence, had repeatedly drawn near the door of his daughters' apartment with a mixture of hesitation and anguish, suddenly made a violent effort, wiped the cold sweat from his brow, and entered the chamber in which Rose and Blanche had taken refuge.

CHAPTER XLIII

THE TEST

DAGOBERT was right in defending his children, as he paternally called Rose and Blanche, and yet the apprehensions of the marshal with regard to the coldness of his daughters were unfortunately justified by appearances. As he had told his father, unable to explain the sad and almost trembling embarrassment which his daughters felt in his presence, he sought in vain for the cause of what he termed their indifference. Now reproaching himself bitterly for not concealing from them his grief at the death of their mother, he feared he might have given them to understand that they would be unable to console him; now supposing that he had not shown himself sufficiently tender, and that he had chilled them with his military sternness; and now repeating with bitter regret that, having always lived away from them, he must be always a stranger to them. In a word, the most unlikely suppositions presented themselves by turns to his mind, and whenever such seeds of doubt, suspicion, or fear are blended with a warm affection, they will sooner or later develop themselves with fatal effect. Yet, notwithstanding this fancied coldness, from which he suffered so much, the affection of the marshal for his daughters was so true and deep that the thought of again quitting them caused the hesitations which were the torment of his life, and provoked an incessant struggle between his paternal love and the duty he held most sacred.

The injurious calumnies, which had been so skillfully propagated that men of honor like his old brothers in arms were found to attach some credit to them, had been spread with frightful pertinacity by the friends of the Princess de Saint-Dizier. We shall describe hereafter the meaning and object of these odious reports which, joined with so many other fatal injuries, had filled up the measure of the marshal's indignation.

Inflamed with anger, excited almost to madness by this incessant "stabbing with pins" (as he had himself called it), and offended at some

of Dagobert's words, he had spoken harshly to him. But, after the soldier's departure, when left to reflect in silence, the marshal remembered the warm and earnest expressions of the defender of his children, and a doubt crossed his mind as to the reality of the coldness of which he accused them. Therefore, having taken a terrible resolution, in case a new trial should confirm his desponding doubts, he entered, as we before said, his daughters' chamber.

The discussion with Dagobert had been so loud that the sound of the voices had confusedly reached the ears of the two sisters, even after they had taken refuge in their bedroom. So that, on the arrival of their father, their pale faces betrayed their fear and anxiety. At sight of the marshal, whose countenance was also much agitated, the girls rose respectfully, but remained close together, trembling in each other's arms.

And yet there was neither anger nor severity on their father's face, only a deep, almost supplicating grief, which seemed to say :

"My children, I suffer—I have come to you—console me, love me! or I shall die!"

The marshal's countenance was at this moment so expressive that, the first impulse of fear once surmounted, the sisters were about to throw themselves into his arms; but remembering the recommendations of the anonymous letter, which told them how painful any effusion of their tenderness was to their father, they exchanged a rapid glance and remained motionless.

By a cruel fatality the marshal at this moment burned to open his arms to his children. He looked at them with love, he even made a slight movement as if to call them to him; but he would not attempt more, for fear of meeting with no response. Still the poor children, paralyzed by perfidious counsels, remained mute, motionless, trembling!

At this apparent insensibility the marshal felt his heart fail, he could no longer doubt his children did not understand either his terrible grief or his despairing tenderness.

"Always the same coldness?" thought he. "I was not deceived."

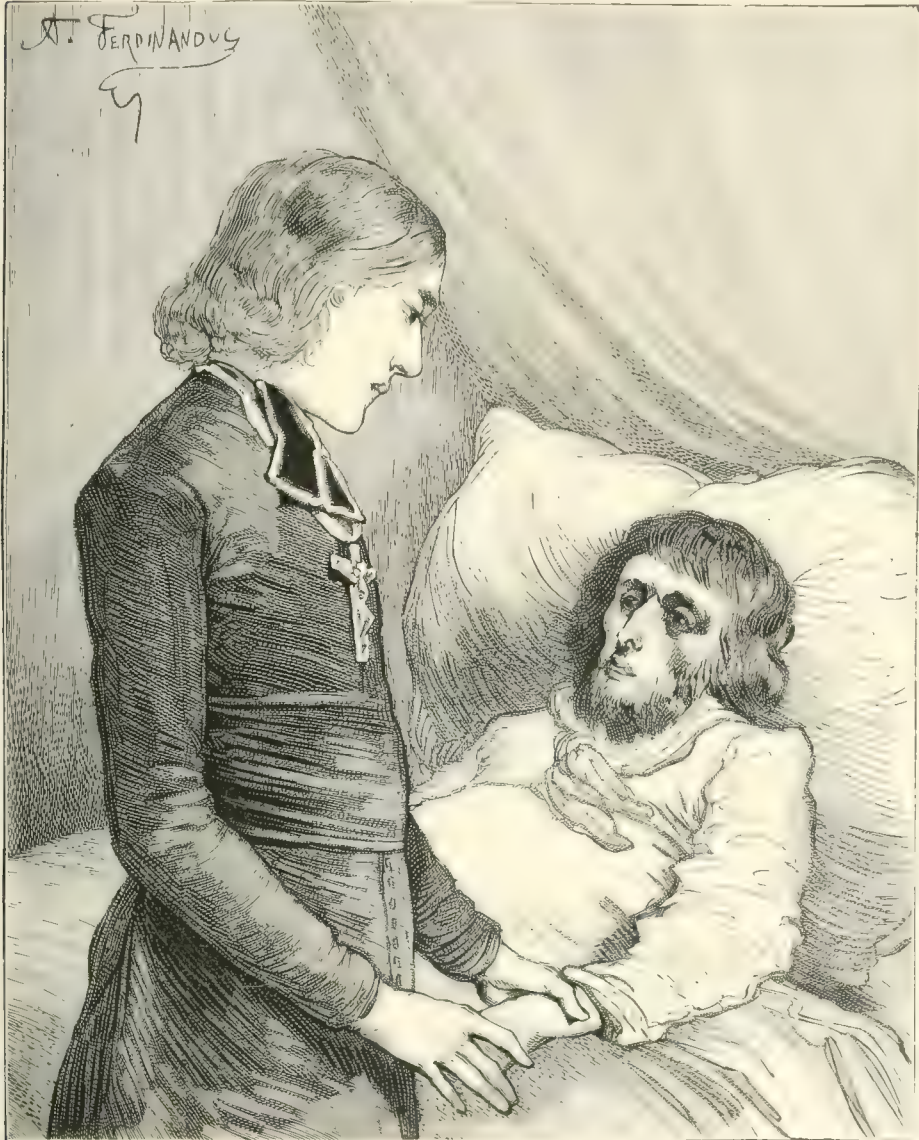
Striving, however, to conceal what he felt, he advanced toward them and said, in a voice which he endeavored to make as calm as possible :

"Good-day, my children."

"Good-day, father," answered Rose, somewhat less timid than her sister.

"I was not able to see you yesterday," said the marshal in an agitated tone. "I was so full, you see, of important business. You are not angry with me for neglecting you?" added he, trying to smile, not

daring to tell them that during that last night of anguish he had crept to their bedside to gaze on them in their sleep. "You forgive me for having forgotten you, is it not so?"



"Yes, father," said Blanche, casting down her eyes.

"And if I was forced to go away for some time," resumed the marshal slowly, "you would likewise forgive me? You could console yourselves for my absence, could you not?"

"We should be very sorry, if you were to confine yourself the least in the world for us," answered Rose, remembering the anonymous letter, and what it said of the sacrifices which their presence cost their father.

At this reply, which was made with as much embarrassment as timidity, and in which the marshal saw nothing but a mixture of simplicity and indifference, the unfortunate father no longer doubted of his children's want of affection.

"It is all over," thought he, as he gazed upon them. "No chord of sympathy stirs in their bosom. Whether I go — whether I remain — matters not to them. No, I am nothing to these children — since, at this awful moment, when they see me perhaps for the last time, no filial instinct tells them that their affection might save me still!"

During these terrible reflections the marshal had not taken his eyes off his children, and his manly countenance assumed an expression at once so touching and mournful—his look revealed so painfully the tortures of his despairing soul—that Rose and Blanche, confused, alarmed, but yielding together to a spontaneous movement, threw themselves on their father's neck, and covered him with tears and caresses. Marshal Simon had not spoken a word; his daughters had not uttered a sound; and yet all three had at length understood one another. A sympathetic shock had electrified and mingled those three hearts.

Vain fears, false doubts, lying counsel, all had yielded to the irresistible emotion which had brought the daughters to their father's arms. A sudden revelation gave them faith, at the fatal moment when incurable suspicion was about to separate them forever.

In a second the marshal felt all this, but words failed him. Pale, bewildered, kissing the brows, the hair, the hands of his daughters, weeping, sighing, smiling all in turn, he was wild, delirious, drunk with happiness. At length he exclaimed:

"I have found them, or, rather, I had never lost them. They loved me, and did not dare to tell me so. I overawed them. And I thought it was my fault. Heavens! what good that does! what strength, what heart, what hope! — Ha! ha!" cried he, laughing and weeping at the same time, while he covered his children with caresses; "they may despise me now, they may harass me now—I defy them all. My own blue eyes! my sweet blue eyes! look at me well, and inspire me with new life."

"Oh, father! you love us then as much as we love you?" cried Rose, with enchanting simplicity.

"And we may often, very often, perhaps every day, throw ourselves

on your neck, embrace you, and prove how glad we are to be with you?"

"Show you, dear father, all the store of love we were heaping up in our hearts—so sad, alas! that we could not spend it upon you?"

"Tell you aloud all that we think in secret?"

"Yes, you may do so—you may do so," said Marshal Simon, faltering with joy; "what prevented you, my children? But no; do not answer; enough of the past!—I know all, I understand all. You misinterpreted my gloom, and it made you sad; I, in my turn, misinterpreted your sadness. But never mind; I scarcely know what I am saying to you. I only think of looking at you; and it dazzles me—it confuses me—it is the dizziness of joy!"

"Oh, look at us, father! look into our eyes, into our hearts," cried Rose, with rapture.

"And you will read there happiness for us and love for you, sir!" added Blanche.

"Sir, sir!" said the marshal, in a tone of affectionate reproach; "what does that mean? Will you call me *father*, if you please?"

"Dear father, your hand!" said Blanche, as she took it, and placed it on her heart.

"Dear father, your hand!" said Rose, as she took the other hand of the marshal. "Do you believe now in our love and happiness?" she continued.

It is impossible to describe the charming expression of filial pride in the divine faces of the girls, as their father, slightly pressing their virgin bosoms, seemed to count with delight the joyous pulsations of their hearts.

"Oh, yes! happiness and affection can alone make the heart beat thus!" cried the marshal.

A hoarse sob, heard in the direction of the open door, made the three turn round, and there they saw the tall figure of Dagobert, with the black nose of *Spoilsport* reaching to his master's knee.

The soldier, drying his eyes and mustache with his little blue cotton handkerchief, remained motionless as the god Terminus. When he could speak, he addressed himself to the marshal, and, shaking his head, muttered, in a hoarse voice, for the good man was swallowing his tears: "Did I not tell you so?"

"Silence!" said the marshal, with a sign of intelligence. "You were a better father than myself, my old friend. Come and kiss them! I shall not be jealous."

The marshal stretched out his hand to the soldier, who pressed it cordially, while the two sisters threw themselves on his neck, and

Spoilsport, according to custom, wishing to have his share in the general joy, raised himself on his hind legs and rested his fore-paws against his master's back. There was a moment of profound silence.

The celestial felicity enjoyed during that moment, by the marshal, his daughters, and the soldier, was interrupted by the barking of *Spoilsport*, who suddenly quitted the attitude of a biped. The happy group separated, looked round, and saw Loony's stupid face. He looked even duller than usual, as he stood quite still, in the doorway, staring with wide-stretched eyes, and holding a feather-broom under his arm, and in his hand the ever-present basket of wood.

Nothing makes one so gay as happiness; and, though this grotesque figure appeared at a very unseasonable moment, it was received with frank laughter from the blooming lips of Rose and Blanche. Having made the marshal's daughters laugh, after their long sadness, Loony at once acquired a claim to the indulgence of the marshal, who said to him good-humoredly:

"What do you want, my lad?"

"It's not me, my lord duke!" answered Loony, laying his hand on his breast, as if he were taking a vow, so that his feather-brush fell down from under his arm. The laughter of the girls redoubled.

"It is not you?" said the marshal.

"Here, *Spoilsport*!" Dagobert called, for the honest dog seemed to have a secret dislike for the pretended idiot, and approached him with an angry air.

"No, my lord duke, it is not me!" resumed Loony. "It is the footman, who told me to tell M. Dagobert, when I brought up the wood, to tell my lord duke, as I was coming up with the basket, that M. Robert wants to see him."

The girls laughed still more at this new stupidity. But, at the name of Robert, Marshal Simon started.

M. Robert was the secret emissary of Rodin, with regard to the possible but adventurous enterprise of attempting the liberation of Napoleon II.

After a moment's silence the marshal, whose face was still radiant with joy and happiness, said to Loony:

"Beg M. Robert to wait for me a moment in my study."

"Yes, my lord duke," answered Loony, bowing almost to the ground.

The simpleton withdrew, and the marshal said to his daughters in a joyous tone:

"You see that, in a moment like this, one does not leave one's children, even for M. Robert."

"Oh! that's right, father!" cried Blanche gayly; "for I was already very angry with this M. Robert."

"Have you pen and paper at hand?" asked the marshal.

"Yes, father; there on the table," said Rose hastily, as she pointed to a little desk near one of the windows, toward which the marshal now advanced rapidly.

From motives of delicacy the girls remained where they were, close to the fireplace, and caressed each other tenderly, as if to congratulate themselves in private on the unexpected happiness of this day.

The marshal seated himself at the desk and made a sign to Dagobert to draw near.

While he wrote rapidly a few words in a firm hand, he said to the soldier with a smile, in so low a tone that it was impossible for his daughters to hear:

"Do you know what I had almost resolved upon before entering this room?"

"What, general?"

"To blow my brains out. It is to my children that I owe my life."

And the marshal continued writing.

Dagobert started at this communication, and then replied, also in a whisper:

"It would not have been with your pistols. I took off the caps."

The marshal turned round hastily, and looked at him with an air of surprise.

But the soldier only nodded his head affirmatively, and added:

"Thank Heaven, we have now done with all those ideas!"

The marshal's only answer was to glance at his children, his eyes swimming with tenderness and sparkling with delight; then, sealing the note he had written, he gave it to the soldier, and said to him:

"Give that to M. Robert. I will see him to-morrow."

Dagobert took the letter and went out. Returning toward his daughters, the marshal joyfully extended his arms to them and said: "Now, young ladies, two nice kisses for having sacrificed M. Robert to you. Have I not earned them?" And Rose and Blanche threw themselves on their father's neck.

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About the time that these events were taking place at Paris, two travelers, wide apart from each other, exchanged mysterious thoughts through the breadth of space.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE RUINS OF THE ABBEY OF ST. JOHN THE BAPTIST

THE sun is fast sinking. In the depths of an immense piney wood, in the midst of profound solitude, rise the ruins of an abbey, once sacred to St. John the Baptist.

Ivy, moss, and creeping plants almost entirely conceal the stones, now black with age. Some broken arches, some walls pierced with pointed windows, still remain standing, visible on the dark background of the thick wood. Looking down upon this mass of ruins from a broken pedestal half covered with ivy, a mutilated but colossal statue of stone still keeps its place. This statue is strange and awful. It represents a headless human figure. Clad in the antique toga, it holds in its hand a dish, and on that dish is a head. This head is its own. It is the statue of St. John the Baptist and martyr, put to death by wish of Herodias.

The silence around is solemn. From time to time, however, is heard the dull rustling of the enormous branches of the pine-trees, shaken by the wind.

Copper-colored clouds, reddened by the setting sun, pass slowly over the forest and are reflected in the current of a brook, which, deriving its source from a neighboring mass of rocks, flows through the ruins. The water flows, the clouds pass on, the ancient trees tremble, the breeze murmurs.

Suddenly, through the shadow thrown by the overhanging wood, which stretches far into endless depths, a human form appears.

It is a woman. She advances slowly toward the ruins. She has reached them. She treads the once sacred ground. This woman is pale, her look sad, her long robe floats on the wind, her feet are covered with dust. She walks with difficulty and pain.

A block of stone is placed near the stream, almost at the foot of the statue of St. John the Baptist. Upon this stone she sinks breathless and exhausted, worn out with fatigue.

And yet, for many days, many years, many centuries, she has walked on unwearied.

For the first time she feels an unconquerable sense of lassitude.



For the first time her feet begin to fail her.

For the first time she, who traversed with firm and equal footsteps the moving lava of torrid deserts, while whole caravans were buried in drifts of fiery sand—who passed, with steady and disdainful tread, over

the eternal snows of Arctic regions, over icy solitudes, in which no other human being could live—who had been spared by the devouring flames of conflagrations and by the impetuous waters of torrents—she, in brief, who for centuries had had nothing in common with humanity, for the first time suffers mortal pain.

Her feet bleed, her limbs ache with fatigue, she is devoured by burning thirst.

She feels these infirmities, yet scarcely dares to believe them real.

Her joy would be too immense!

But now her throat becomes dry, contracted, all on fire. She sees the stream and throws herself on her knees to quench her thirst in that crystal current, transparent as a mirror.

What happens then? Hardly have her fevered lips touched the fresh pure water than, still kneeling, supported on her hands, she suddenly ceases to drink and gazes eagerly on the limpid stream. Forgetting the thirst which devours her, she utters a loud cry—a cry of deep, earnest, religious joy, like a note of praise and infinite gratitude to Heaven. In that deep mirror she perceives that she has grown older. In a few days, a few hours, a few minutes, perhaps in a single second, she has attained the maturity of age.

She, who for more than eighteen centuries has been as a woman of twenty, carrying through successive generations the load of her imperishable youth—she has grown old and may, perhaps, at length hope to die.

Every minute of her life may now bring her nearer to the last home!

Transported by that ineffable hope she rises and lifts her eyes to heaven, clasping her hands in an attitude of fervent prayer. Then her eyes rest on the tall statue of stone representing St. John. The head which the martyr carries in his hand seems from beneath its half-closed granite eyelids to cast upon the Wandering Jewess a glance of commiseration and pity.

And it was she, Herodias, who, in the cruel intoxication of a pagan festival, demanded the murder of a saint! And it is at the foot of the martyr's image that, for the first time, the immortality which weighed on her for so many centuries seems likely to find a term!

"Oh, impenetrable mystery! Oh, divine hope!" she cries. "The wrath of Heaven is at length appeased. The hand of the Lord brings me to the feet of the blessed martyr, and I begin to once more feel myself a human creature. And yet it was to avenge his death that the same Heaven condemned me to eternal wanderings!

"Oh, Lord! grant that I may not be the only one forgiven. May

he—the artisan, who, like me, daughter of a king, wanders on for centuries—likewise hope to reach the end of that immense journey!

“Where is he, Lord; where is he? Hast thou deprived me of the power once bestowed to see and hear him through the vastness of intervening space? Oh, in this mighty moment, restore me that divine gift, for the more I feel these human infirmities, which I hail and bless as the end of my eternity of ills, the more my sight loses the power to traverse immensity, and my ear to catch the sound of that wanderer’s accents from the other extremity of the globe.”

Night had fallen, dark and stormy. The wind rose in the midst of the great pine-trees. Behind their black summits, through masses of dark cloud, slowly sailed the silver disk of the moon.

The invocation of the Wandering Jewess had perhaps been heard.

Suddenly her eyes closed — with hands clasped together she remained kneeling in the heart of the ruins — motionless as a statue upon a tomb. And then she had a wondrous dream!

CHAPTER XLV

THE CALVARY



HIS was the vision of Herodias: On the summit of a high, steep, rocky mountain there stands a cross. The sun is sinking, even as when the Jewess herself, worn out with fatigue, entered the ruins of St. John's Abbey. The great figure on the cross — which looks down from this Calvary on the mountain, and on the vast dreary plain beyond — stands out white and pale against the dark-blue clouds which stretch across the heavens and assume a violet tint toward the horizon. There, where the setting sun has left a long track of lurid light, almost of the hue of blood, as far as the eye can reach no vegetation appears on the surface of the gloomy desert, covered with sand and stones like the ancient bed of some dried-up ocean. A silence as of death broods over this desolate tract. Sometimes gigantic black vultures, with red, unfeathered necks, luminous yellow eyes, stooping from their lofty flight in the midst of these solitudes, come to make their bloody feast on the prey they have carried off from less uncultivated regions.

How, then, did this Calvary, this place of prayer, come to be erected so far from the abodes of men?

This Calvary was prepared at a great cost by a repentant sinner. He had done much harm to his fellow-creatures, and, in the hope of obtaining pardon for his crimes, he had climbed this mountain on his knees, and become a hermit, and lived there till his death, at the foot of this cross, only sheltered by a roof of thatch, now long since swept away by the wind.

The sun is still sinking. The sky becomes darker. The luminous lines on the horizon grow fainter and fainter, like heated bars of iron that gradually grow cool.

Suddenly, on the eastern side of the Calvary, is heard the noise of some falling stones, which, loosened from the side of the mountain, roll down rebounding to its base. These stones have been loosened by the

foot of a traveler, who, after traversing the plain below, has during the last hour been climbing the steep ascent.

He is not yet visible — but one hears the echo of his tread — slow, steady, and firm. At length he reaches the top of the mountain, and his tall figure stands out against the stormy sky.

The traveler is pale as the great Christ on the cross. On his broad forehead a black line extends from one temple to the other.

It is the cobbler of Jerusalem.

The poor artisan, who, hardened by misery, injustice, and oppression, without pity for the suffering of the Divine Being who bore the cross, repulsed him from his dwelling, and bade him: “Go on! go on! go on!”

And, from that day, the avenging Deity has in his turn said to the artisan of Jerusalem:

“GO ON! GO ON! GO ON!”

And he has gone on, without end or rest.

Nor did the divine vengeance stop there. From time to time death has followed the steps of the wanderer, and innumerable graves have been even as mile-stones on his fatal path. And if ever he found periods of repose in the midst of his infinite grief, it was when the hand of the Lord led him into deep solitudes, like that where he now dragged his steps along. In passing over that dreary plain or climbing to that rude Calvary, he at least heard no more the funeral knell, which always, always sounded behind him in every inhabited region.

All day long, even at this hour, plunged in the black abyss of his thoughts, following the fatal track — going whither he was guided by the invisible hand, with head bowed on his breast and eyes fixed upon the ground, the wanderer had passed over the plain, and ascended the mountain, without once looking at the sky — without even perceiving the Calvary — without seeing the image upon the cross.

He thought of the last descendants of his race. He felt, by the sinking of his heart, that great peril continued to threaten them. And in the bitterness of a despair wild and deep as the ocean, the cobbler of Jerusalem seated himself at the foot of the cross.

At this moment a farewell ray of the setting sun, piercing the dark mass of clouds, threw a reflection upon the Calvary vivid as a conflagration's glare. The Jew rested his forehead upon his hand. His long hair, shaken by the evening breeze, fell over his pale face, when, sweeping it back from his brow, he started with surprise — he who had long ceased to wonder at anything.

With eager glance he contemplated the long lock of hair that he held between his fingers. That hair, until now black as night, had become gray. He also, like unto Herodias, was growing older.

His progress toward old age, stopped for eighteen hundred years, had resumed its course.

Like the Wandering Jewess, he might henceforth hope for the rest of the grave.

Throwing himself on his knees, he stretched his hands toward heaven, to ask for the explanation of the mystery which filled him with hope. Then, for the first time, his eyes rested on the Crucified One, looking down upon the Calvary, even as the Wandering Jewess had fixed her gaze on the granite eyelids of the Blessed Martyr.

The Saviour, his head bowed under the weight of his crown of thorns, seemed from the cross to view with pity and pardon the artisan who for so many centuries had felt his curse, and who, kneeling, with his body thrown backward in an attitude of fear and supplication, now lifted toward the crucifix his imploring hands.

"Oh, Christ!" cried the Jew, "the avenging arm of Heaven brings me back to the foot of this heavy cross, which thou didst bear when, stopping at the door of my poor dwelling, thou wert repulsed with merciless harshness and I said unto thee: 'Go on! Go on!' After my long life of wanderings, I am again before this cross, and my hair begins to whiten. Oh, Lord! in thy divine mercy, hast thou at length pardoned me? Have I reached the term of my endless march? Will thy celestial clemency grant me at length the repose of the sepulcher, which until now, alas! has ever fled before me? Oh, if thy mercy should descend upon me, let it fall likewise upon that woman whose woes are equal to mine own! Protect also the last descendants of my race. What will be their fate? Already, Lord, one of them—the only one that misfortune had perverted—has perished from the face of the earth. Is it for this that my hair grows gray? Will my crime only be expiated when there no longer remains in this world one member of our accursed race? Or does this proof of thy powerful goodness, Lord, which restores me to the condition of humanity, serve also as a sign of the pardon and happiness of my family? Will they at length triumph over the perils which beset them? Will they, accomplishing the good which their ancestor designed for his fellow-creatures, merit forgiveness both for themselves and me? Or will they, inexorably condemned as the accursed scions of an accursed stock, expiate the original stain of my detested crime?"

"Oh, tell me—tell me, gracious Lord! Shall I be forgiven with them, or will they be punished with me?"

The twilight gave place to a dark and stormy night, yet the Jew continued to pray, kneeling at the foot of the cross.

CHAPTER XLVI

THE COUNCIL.

THE following scene took place at the Hotel Saint-Dizier two days after the reconciliation of Marshal Simon with his daughters.

The princess is listening with the most profound attention to the words of Rodin. The reverend father, according to his habit, stands leaning against the mantel-piece, with his hands thrust into the pockets of his old brown great-coat. His thick, dirty shoes have left their mark on the ermine hearth-rug. A deep sense of satisfaction is impressed on the Jesuit's cadaverous countenance. Princess de Saint-Dizier, dressed with that sort of modest elegance which becomes a mother of the Church, keeps her eyes fixed on Rodin — for the latter has completely supplanted Father d'Aigrigny in the good graces of this pious lady. The coolness, audacity, lofty intelligence, and rough and imperious character of the *ex-socius* have overawed this proud woman and inspired her with a sincere admiration. Even his filthy habits and often brutal repartees have their charm for her, and she now prefers them to the exquisite politeness and perfumed elegance of the accomplished Father d'Aigrigny.

"Yes, madame," said Rodin in a sanctified tone, for these people do not take off their masks even with their accomplices, "yes, madame, we have excellent news from our house at St. Hérem. M. Hardy, the infidel, the free-thinker, has at length entered the pale of the holy Roman Catholic and Apostolic Church."

Rodin pronounced these last words with a nasal twang, and the devout lady bowed her head respectfully.

"Grace has at length touched the heart of this impious man," continued Rodin, "and so effectually that, in his ascetic enthusiasm, he has already wished to take the vows which will bind him forever to our divine Order."

"So soon, father?" said the princess, in astonishment.

"Our statutes are opposed to this precipitation, unless in the case of

a penitent *in articulo mortis*,—on the very gasp of death,—should such a person consider it necessary for his salvation to die in the habit of our Order, and leave us all his wealth for the greater glory of the Lord.”

“And is M. Hardy in so dangerous a condition, father?”

“He has a violent fever. After so many successive calamities, which have miraculously brought him into the path of salvation,” said Rodin piously, “his frail and delicate constitution is almost broken up, morally and physically. Austerities, macerations, and the divine joys of ecstasy will probably hasten his passage to eternal life, and in a few days,” said the priest, shaking his head with a solemn air, “perhaps ——”

“So soon as that, father?”

“It is almost certain. I have therefore made use of my dispensations to receive the dear penitent, as *in articulo mortis*, a member of our divine Company, to which, in the usual course, he has made over all his possessions, present and to come; so that now he can devote himself entirely to the care of his soul, which will be one victim more rescued from the claws of Satan.”

“Oh, father!” cried the lady, in admiration; “it is a miraculous conversion. Father d’Aigrigny told me how you had to contend against the influence of Abbé Gabriel.”

“The Abbé Gabriel,” replied Rodin, “has been punished for meddling with what did not concern him. I have procured his suspension and he has been deprived of his curacy. I hear that he now goes about the cholera-hospitals to administer Christian consolation; we cannot oppose that; but this universal comforter is of the true heretical stamp.”

“He is a dangerous character, no doubt,” answered the princess, “for he has considerable influence over other men. It must have needed all your admirable and irresistible eloquence to combat the detestable counsels of this Abbé Gabriel, who had taken it into his head to persuade M. Hardy to return to the life of the world. Really, father, you are a second St. Chrysostom.”

“Tut, tut, madame,” said Rodin abruptly, for he was very little sensible to flattery; “keep that for others.”

“I tell you that you’re a second St. Chrysostom, father,” repeated the princess, with enthusiasm; “like him, you deserve the name of Golden Mouth.”

“Stuff, madame,” said Rodin brutally, shrugging his shoulders; “my lips are too pale, my teeth too black, for a mouth of gold. You must be only joking.”

“But, father ——”

"No, madame, you will not catch old birds with chaff," replied Rodin harshly. "I hate compliments, and I never pay them."

"Your modesty must pardon me, father," said the princess humbly ;



"I could not resist the desire to express to you my admiration, for, as you almost predicted, or at least foresaw, two members of the Rennepont family have, within the last few months, *resigned all claim to the inheritance.*"

Rodin looked at Madame de Saint-Dizier with a softened and approving air, as he heard her thus describe the position of the two defunct claimants. For, in Rodin's view of the case, M. Hardy, in consequence of his donation and his suicidal asceticism, belonged no longer to this world.

The lady continued :

"One of these men, a wretched artisan, has been led to his ruin by the exaggeration of his vices. You have brought the other into the path of salvation by carrying out his loving and tender qualities. Honor, then, to your foresight, father ! for you said that you would make use of the passions to attain your end."

"Do not boast too soon," said Rodin impatiently. "Have you forgotten your niece and the daughters of Marshal Simon ? Have they also made a Christian end or resigned their claim to share in this inheritance ?"

"No, doubtless."

"Hence, you see, madame, we should not lose time in congratulating ourselves on the past, but make ready for the future. The great day approaches. The 1st of June is not far off. Heaven grant we may not see the four surviving members of the family continue to live impenitent up to that period, and so take possession of this enormous property—the source of perdition in their hands, but productive of the glory of the Church in the hands of our Company !"

"True, father !"

"By the way, you were to see your lawyers on the subject of your niece ?"

"I have seen them, father. However uncertain may be the chance of which I spoke, it is worth trying. I shall know to-day, I hope, if it is legally possible."

"Perhaps then, in the new condition of life to which she would be reduced, we might find means to effect her conversion," said Rodin, with a strange and hideous smile ; "until now, since she has been so fatally brought in contact with the Oriental, the happiness of these two pagans appears bright and changeless as the diamond. Nothing bites into it, not even Faringhea's tooth. Let us hope that the Lord will wreak justice on their vain and guilty felicity !"

This conversation was here interrupted by Father d'Aigrigny, who entered the room with an air of triumph, and exclaimed :

"Victory !"

"What do you say ?" asked the princess.

"He is gone — last night," said Father d'Aigrigny.

"Who ?" said Rodin.

"Marshal Simon," replied the abbé.

"At last!" said Rodin, unable to hide his joy.

"It was no doubt his interview with General d'Havrincourt which filled up the measure," cried the princess, "for I know he had a long conversation with the general, who, like so many others, believed the reports in circulation. All means are good against the impious!" added the princess, by way of moral.

"Have you any details?" asked Rodin.

"I have just left Robert," said Father d'Aigrigny. "His age and description agree with the marshal's, and the latter travels with his papers. Only one thing has greatly surprised your emissary."

"What is that?" said Rodin.

"Until now he had always to contend with the hesitations of the marshal, and had, moreover, noticed his gloomy and desponding air. Yesterday, on the contrary, he found him so bright with happiness that he could not help asking him the cause of the alteration."

"Well?" said Rodin and the princess together, both extremely surprised.

"The marshal answered: 'I am indeed the happiest man in the world, for I am going joyfully to accomplish a sacred duty!'"

The three actors in this scene looked at one another in silence.

"And what can have produced this sudden change in the mind of the marshal?" said the princess, with a pensive air. "We rather reckoned on sorrow and every kind of irritation to urge him to engage in this adventurous enterprise."

"I cannot make it out," said Rodin, reflecting; "but no matter — he is gone. We must not lose a moment to commence operations on his daughters. Has he taken that infernal soldier with him?"

"No," said Father d'Aigrigny; "unfortunately, he has not done so. Warned by the past, he will redouble his precautions; and a man whom we might have used against him at a pinch has just been taken with the contagion."

"Who is that?" asked the princess.

"Morok. I could count upon him anywhere and for anything. He is lost to us; for, should he recover from the cholera, I fear he will fall a victim to a horrible and incurable disease."

"How so?"

"A few days ago he was bitten by one of the mastiffs of his menagerie, and the next day the dog showed symptoms of hydrophobia."

"Ah! it is dreadful," cried the princess; "and where is this unfortunate man?"

"He has been taken to one of the temporary hospitals established in

Paris, for at present he has only been attacked with cholera. It is doubly unfortunate, I repeat, for he was a devoted, determined fellow, ready for anything. Now this soldier, who has the care of the orphans, will be very difficult to get at, and yet only through him can we hope to reach Marshal Simon's daughters."

"That is clear," said Rodin thoughtfully.

"Particularly since the anonymous letters have again awakened his suspicions," added Father d'Aigrigny, "and ——"

"Talking of the anonymous letters," said Rodin suddenly, interrupting Father d'Aigrigny, "there is a fact that you ought to know; I will tell you why."

"What is it?"

"Besides the letters that you know of, Marshal Simon has received a number of others unknown to you, in which, by every possible means, it is tried to exasperate his irritation against yourself — for they remind him of all the reasons he has to hate you, and mock at him because your sacred character shelters you from his vengeance."

Father d'Aigrigny looked at Rodin with amazement, colored in spite of himself, and said to him:

"But for what purpose has your reverence acted in this manner?"

"First of all, to clear myself of suspicion with regard to the letters; then to excite the rage of the marshal to madness, by incessantly reminding him of the just grounds he has to hate you, and of the impossibility of being avenged upon you. This, joined to the other emotions of sorrow and anger, which ferment in the savage bosom of this man of bloodshed, tended to urge him on to the rash enterprise, which is the consequence and the punishment of his idolatry for a miserable usurper."

"That may be," said Father d'Aigrigny, with an air of constraint; "but I will observe to your reverence that it was, perhaps, rather dangerous thus to excite Marshal Simon against me."

"Why?" asked Rodin, as he fixed a piercing look upon Father d'Aigrigny.

"Because the marshal, excited beyond all bounds, and remembering only our mutual hate, might seek me out ——"

"Well, and what then?"

"Well, he might forget that I am a priest ——"

"Oh, you are afraid, are you?" said Rodin disdainfully, interrupting Father d'Aigrigny.

At the words, "You are afraid," the reverend father almost started from his chair; but, recovering his coolness, he answered:

"Your reverence is right; yes, I should be afraid under such circumstances; I should be afraid of forgetting that I am a priest, and of remembering too well that I have been a soldier."

"Really," said Rodin, with sovereign contempt. "You are still no further than that stupid and savage point of honor? Your cassock has not yet extinguished the war-like fire? So that if this brawling swordsman, whose poor, weak head, empty and sonorous as a drum, is so easily turned with the stupid jargon of '*military honor, oaths, Napoleon II.*'—if this brawling bravo, I say, were to commit some violence against you, it would require a great effort, I suppose, for you to remain calm?"

"It is useless, I think," said Father d'Aigrigny, quite unable to control his agitation, "for your reverence to enter upon such questions."

"As your superior," answered Rodin severely, "I have the right to ask. If Marshal Simon had lifted his hand against you——"

"Sir," cried the reverend father.

"There are no sirs here—we are only priests," said Rodin harshly.

Father d'Aigrigny held down his head, scarcely able to repress his rage.

"I ask you," continued Rodin obstinately, "if Marshal Simon had struck you? Is that clear?"

"Enough! in mercy," said Father d'Aigrigny. "Enough!"

"Or, if you like it better, had Marshal Simon left the marks of his fingers on your cheek?" resumed Rodin, with the utmost pertinacity.

Father d'Aigrigny, pale as death, ground his teeth in a kind of fury at the very idea of such an insult, while Rodin, who had no doubt his object in asking the question, raised his flabby eyelids and seemed to watch attentively the significant symptoms revealed in the agitated countenance of the ex-colonel.

As for the princess, that devout lady, more and more under the charm of the *ex-socius*, seemed to have her admiration for Rodin augmented by the painful and false position of D'Aigrigny.

At length, recovering partly his presence of mind, Father d'Aigrigny replied in a forcedly calm tone:

"If I were to be exposed to such an insult I would pray Heaven to give me resignation and humility."

"And no doubt Heaven would hear your prayers," said Rodin coldly, satisfied with the trial to which he had just put him. "Besides, you are now warned, and it is not very probable," added he, with a grim smile, "that Marshal Simon will ever return to test your humility. But if he were to return," said Rodin, fixing on the reverend father a long and piercing look, "you would know how to show this brutal swordsman, in spite of all his violence, what resignation and humility there is in a Christian soul!"

Two humble knocks at the door here interrupted the conversation for a moment. A footman entered bearing a large sealed packet on a salver, which he presented to the princess. After this he withdrew.

Madame de Saint-Dizier, having by a look asked Rodin's permission to open the letter, began to read it—and a cruel satisfaction was soon visible on her face.

"There is hope," cried she, addressing herself to Rodin; "the demand is rigorously legal, and the consequences may be such as we desire. In a word, my niece may any day be exposed to complete destitution. She, who is so extravagant! What a change in her life!"

"We shall then no doubt have some hold on that untamable character," said Rodin, with a meditative air; "for, till now, all has failed in that direction, and one would suppose some kinds of happiness are invulnerable," added the Jesuit, gnawing his flat and dirty nails.

"But, to obtain the result we desire, we must exasperate my niece's pride. It is therefore absolutely necessary that I should see and talk to her," said the Princess de Saint-Dizier, reflecting.

"Mademoiselle de Cardoville will refuse this interview," said Father d'Aigrigny.

"Perhaps," replied the princess. "But she is so happy that her audacity must be at its height. Yes, yes—I know her—and I will write in such a manner that she will come."

"You think so?" asked Rodin, with a doubtful air.

"Do not fear it, father," answered the lady; "she will come. And her pride once brought into play, we may hope a good deal from it."

"We must then act, madame," resumed Rodin; "yes, act promptly. The moment approaches. Hate and suspicion are awake. There is not a moment to lose."

"As for hate," replied the princess, "Mademoiselle de Cardoville must have seen to what her lawsuit would lead, about what she calls her illegal detention in a lunatic asylum, and that of the two young ladies in St. Mary's Convent. Thank Heaven, we have friends everywhere! I know from good authority that the case will break down from want of evidence, in spite of the animosity of certain parliamentary magistrates, who shall be well remembered."

"Under these circumstances," replied Rodin, "the departure of the marshal gives us every latitude. We must act immediately on his daughters."

"But how?" said the princess.

"We must see them," resumed Rodin, "talk with them, study them. Then we shall act in consequence."

"But the soldier will not leave them a second," said Father d'Aigrigny.

"Then," replied Rodin, "we must talk to them in presence of the soldier, and get him on our side."

"That hope is idle," cried Father d'Aigrigny. "You do not know the military honor of his character. You do not know this man."

"Don't I know him?" said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders. "Did not Mademoiselle de Cardoville present me to him as her liberator, when I denounced you as the soul of the conspiracy? Did I not restore to him his ridiculous imperial relic—his cross of honor—when we met at Dr. Baleinier's? Did I not bring him back the girls from the convent, and place them in the arms of their father?"

"Yes," replied the princess; "but, since that time, my abominable niece has either guessed or discovered all. She told you so herself, father."

"She told me that she considered me her most mortal enemy," said Rodin. "Be it so. But did she tell the same to the marshal? Has she even mentioned me to him? And if she have done so, has the marshal communicated this circumstance to his soldier? It may be so; but it is by no means sure; in any case, I must ascertain the fact; if the soldier treats me as an enemy, we shall see what is next to be done—but I will first try to be received as a friend."

"When?" asked the princess.

"To-morrow morning," replied Rodin.

"Good Heaven, my dear father!" cried the Princess de Saint-Dizier, in alarm; "if this soldier were to treat you as an enemy—beware."

"I always beware, madame. I have had to face worse enemies than he is," said the Jesuit, showing his black teeth; "the cholera, to begin with."

"But he may refuse to see you, and in what way will you then get at Marshal Simon's daughters?" said Father d'Aigrigny.

"I do not yet know," answered Rodin. "But as I intend to do it, I shall find the means."

"Father," said the princess suddenly, on reflection, "these girls have never seen me, and I might obtain admittance to them without sending in my name."

"That would be perfectly useless at present, madame, for I must first know what course to take with respect to them. I must see and converse with them, at any cost, and then, after I have fixed my plan, your assistance may be very useful. In any case, please to be ready to-morrow, madame, to accompany me."

"To what place, father?"

"To Marshal Simon's."

"To the marshal's?"

"Not exactly. You will get into your carriage, and I will take a hackney-coach. I will then try to obtain an interview with the girls, and

during that time you will wait for me at a few yards from the house. If I succeed, and require your aid, I will come and fetch you ; I can give you my instructions, without any appearance of concert between us."

"I am content, reverend father; but in truth, I tremble at the thought of your interview with that rough trooper."

"The Lord will watch over his servant, madame!" replied Rodin. "As for you, father," added he, addressing the Abbé d'Aigrigny, "dispatch instantly to Vienna the note which is all prepared, to announce the departure and speedy arrival of the marshal. Every precaution has been taken. I shall write more fully this evening."

.
The next morning, about eight o'clock, the Princess de Saint-Dizier in her carriage, and Rodin in his hackney-coach, took the direction of Marshal Simon's house.



THE PRINCESS DE SAINT-DIZIER'S VISIT.

CHAPTER XLVII

HAPPINESS

MARSHAL SIMON has been absent two days. It is eight o'clock in the morning. Dagobert, walking on tiptoe with the greatest caution, so as not to make the floor creak beneath his tread, crosses the room which leads to the bed-chamber of Rose and Blanche, and applies his ear to the door of the apartment. With equal caution, *Spoilsport* follows exactly the movements of his master.

The countenance of the soldier is uneasy, and full of thought. As he approaches the door he says to himself:

"I hope the dear children heard nothing of what happened in the night! It would alarm them, and it is much better that they should not know it at present. It might afflict them sadly, poor dears; and they are so gay, so happy, since they feel sure of their father's love for them. They bore his departure so bravely, I would not for the world that they should know of this unfortunate event."

Then, as he listened, the soldier resumed:

"I hear nothing — and yet they are always awake so early. Can it be sorrow?"

Dagobert's reflections were here interrupted by two frank, hearty bursts of laughter from the interior of the bedroom.

"Come, they are not so sad as I thought," said the soldier, breathing more freely. "Probably they know nothing about it."

Soon the laughter was again heard with redoubled force, and the soldier, delighted at this gayety, so rare on the part of "his children," was much affected by it: the tears started to his eyes at the thought that the orphans had at length recovered the serenity natural to their age; then, passing from one emotion to the other, still listening at the door, with his body leaning forward, and his hands resting on his knees, Dagobert's lip quivered with an expression of mute joy, and, shaking

his head a little, he accompanied with his silent laughter the increasing hilarity of the young girls. At last, as nothing is so contagious as gayety, and as the worthy soldier was in an ecstasy of joy, he finished by laughing aloud with all his might, without knowing why, and only because Rose and Blanche were laughing. *Spoilsport* had never seen his master in such a transport of delight; he looked at him for a while in deep and silent astonishment, and then began to bark in a questioning way.

At this well-known sound the laughter within suddenly ceased, and a sweet voice, still trembling with joyous emotion, exclaimed:

"Is it you, *Spoilsport*, that have come to wake us?"

The dog understood what was said, wagged his tail, held down his ears, and, approaching close to the door, answered the appeal of his young mistress by a kind of friendly growl.

"*Spoilsport*," said Rose, hardly able to restrain her laughter, "you are very early this morning."

"Tell us what o'clock it is, if you please, old fellow?" added Blanche.

"Young ladies, it is past eight," said suddenly the rough voice of Dagobert, accompanying this piece of humor with a loud laugh.

A cry of gay surprise was heard, and then Rose resumed:

"Good-morning, Dagobert."

"Good-morning, my children. You are very lazy to-day, I must tell you."

"It was not our fault. Our dear Augustine has not yet been to call us. We are waiting for her."

"Oh, there it is," said Dagobert to himself, his features once more assuming an expression of anxiety. Then he returned aloud, in a tone of some embarrassment, for the worthy man was no hand at a falsehood:

"My children, your companion went out this morning—very early. She is gone to the country—on business—she will not return for some days—so you had better get up by yourselves for to-day."

"Our good Madame Augustine!" exclaimed Blanche with interest. "I hope it is nothing bad that has made her leave so suddenly—eh, Dagobert?"

"No, no—not at all—only business," answered the soldier. "To see one of her relations."

"Oh, so much the better," said Rose. "Well, Dagobert, when we call, you can come in."

"I will come back in a quarter of an hour," said the soldier as he withdrew; and he thought to himself: "I must lecture that fool Loony—for he is so stupid and so fond of talking that he will let it all out."

The name of the pretended simpleton will serve as a natural transition to inform the reader of the cause of the hilarity of the sisters. They were laughing at the numberless absurdities of the idiot.

The girls rose and dressed themselves, each serving as lady's-maid to the other. Rose had combed and arranged Blanche's hair; it was now Blanche's turn to do the same for her sister. Thus occupied, they formed a charming picture. Rose was seated before the dressing-table; her sister, standing behind her, was smoothing her beautiful brown hair. Happy age! so little removed from childhood that present joy instantly obliterates the traces of past sorrow! But the sisters felt more than joy; it was happiness, deep and unalterable, for their father loved them, and their happiness was a delight and not a pain to him. Assured of the affection of his children, he also, thanks to them, no longer feared any grief. To those three beings, thus certain of their mutual love, what was a momentary separation?

Having explained this, we shall understand the innocent gayety of the sisters, notwithstanding their father's departure, and the happy, joyous expression which now filled with animation their charming faces, on which the late fading rose had begun once more to bloom. Their faith in the future gave to their countenance something resolute and decisive, which added a degree of piquancy to the beauty of their enchanting features.

Blanche, in smoothing her sister's hair, let fall the comb, and, as she was stooping to pick it up, Rose anticipated her, saying:

"If it had been broken, we would have put it into the handle-basket."

Then the two laughed merrily at this expression, which reminded them of an admirable piece of folly on the part of Loony.

The supposed simpleton had broken the handle of a cup, and when the governess of the young ladies had reprimanded him for his carelessness he had answered:

"Never mind, madame; I have put it into the handle-basket."

"The handle-basket. What is that?"

"Yes, madame; it is where I keep all the handles I break off the things."

"Dear me!" said Rose, drying her eyes; "how silly it is to laugh at such foolishness."

"It is so droll," replied Blanche; "how can we help it?"

"All I regret is that father cannot hear us laugh."

"He was so happy to see us gay."

"We must write him to-day the story of the handle-basket."

"And that of the feather-brush, to show that, according to promise, we kept up our spirits during his absence."

"Write to him, sister? No, he is to write to us, and we are not to answer his letters."

"True. Well then, I have an idea. Let us address letters to him here. Dagobert can put them into the post, and, on his return, our father will read our correspondence."

"That will be charming! What nonsense we will write to him, since he takes pleasure in it!"

"And we, too, like to amuse ourselves."

"Oh, certainly. Father's last words have given us so much courage."

"As I listened to them, I felt quite reconciled to his going."

"When he said to us: 'My children, I will confide in you all I can. I go to fulfill a sacred duty, and I must be absent for some time; for though, when I was blind enough to doubt your affection, I could not make up my mind to leave you, my conscience was by no means tranquil. Grief takes such an effect on us that I had not the strength to come to a decision, and my days were passed in painful hesitation. But now that I am certain of your tenderness, all this irresolution has ceased, and I understand how one duty is not to be sacrificed to another, and that I have to perform two duties at once, both equally sacred; and this I now do with joy, and delight, and courage!'"

"Go on, sister!" cried Blanche, rising to draw nearer to Rose. "I think I hear our father, when I remember those words, which must console and support us during his absence."

"And then our father continued: 'Instead of grieving at my departure, you should rejoice in it, you should be proud and happy. I go to perform a good and generous act. Fancy to yourselves that there is somewhere a poor orphan, oppressed and abandoned by all — and that the father of that orphan was once my benefactor, and that I had promised him to protect his son — and that the life of that son is now in peril; tell me, my children, would you regret that I should leave you to fly to the aid of such an orphan?'"

"'No, no, brave father!' we answered; 'we should not then be your daughters!'" continued Rose with enthusiasm. "'Count upon us. We should be indeed unhappy if we thought that our sorrow could deprive thee of thy courage. Go, and every day we will say to ourselves proudly, 'It was to perform a great and noble duty that our father left us — we can wait calmly for his return.''"

"How that idea of duty sustains one, sister," resumed Rose with growing enthusiasm. "It gave our father the courage to leave us without regret, and to us the courage to bear his absence gayly."

"And then how calm we are now! Those mournful dreams, which seemed to portend such sad events, no longer afflict us."

"I tell you, sister, this time we are really happy once for all."

"And then, do you feel like me? I fancy that I am stronger and more courageous, and that I could brave every danger."

"I should think so. We are strong enough now. Our father in the midst, you on one side, I on the other ——"

"Dagobert in the vanguard, and *Spoilsport* in the rear! Then the army will be complete, and let 'em come on by thousands," added a gruff but jovial voice, interrupting the girl, as Dagobert appeared at the half-open door of the room. It was worth looking at his face, radiant with joy; for the old fellow had somewhat indiscreetly been listening to the conversation.

"Oh! you were listening, Paul Pry!" said Rose gayly, as she entered the adjoining room with her sister, and both affectionately embraced the soldier.

"To be sure I was listening; and I only regretted not to have ears as large as *Spoilsport's*. Brave, good girls, that's how I like to see you — bold as brass, and saying to care and sorrow: 'Right about face, march, go to the devil!'"

"He will want to make us swear, now," said Rose to her sister, laughing with all her might.

"Well, now and then it does no harm," said the soldier; "it relieves and calms one, when if one could not swear by five hundred thousand de——"

"That's enough," said Rose, covering with her pretty hand the gray mustache, so as to stop Dagobert in his speech. "If Madame Augustine heard you ——"

"Our poor governess! so mild and timid," resumed Blanche.

"How you would frighten her!"

"Yes," said Dagobert, as he tried to conceal his rising embarrassment; "but she does not hear us. She is gone into the country."

"Good, worthy woman!" replied Blanche, with interest. "She said something of you which shows her excellent heart."

"Certainly," resumed Rose; "for she said to us, in speaking of you, 'Ah, young ladies! my affection must appear very little, compared with M. Dagobert's. But I feel that I also have the right to devote myself for you.'"

"No doubt, no doubt. She has a heart of gold," answered Dagobert.

Then he added to himself, "It's as if they did it on purpose, to bring the conversation back to this poor woman."

"Father made a good choice," continued Rose. "She is the widow of an old officer who was with him in the wars."

"When we were out of spirits," said Blanche, "you should have

seen her uneasiness and grief, and how earnestly she set about consoling us."

"I have seen the tears in her eyes when she looked at us," resumed Rose. "Oh, she loves us tenderly, and we return her affection. With regard to that, Dagobert, we have a plan as soon as our father comes back."

"Be quiet, sister!" said Blanche, laughing. "Dagobert will not keep our secret."

"He!"

"Will you keep it for us, Dagobert?"

"I tell you what," said the soldier, more and more embarrassed; "you had better not tell it me."

"What! can you keep nothing from Madame Augustine?"

"Ah, Dagobert! Dagobert!" said Blanche gayly, holding up her finger at the soldier; "I suspect you very much of paying court to our governess."

"I pay court?" said the soldier — and the expression of his face was so rueful, as he pronounced these words, that the two sisters burst out laughing.

Their hilarity was at its height when the door opened, and Loony advanced into the room, announcing, with a loud voice:

"M. Rodin!"

In fact, the Jesuit glided almost imperceptibly into the apartment, as if to take possession of the ground. Once there, he thought the game his own, and his reptile-eyes sparkled with joy. It would be difficult to paint the surprise of the two sisters and the anger of the soldier, at this unexpected visit.

Rushing upon Loony, Dagobert seized him by the collar, and exclaimed:

"Who gave you leave to introduce any one here, without my permission?"

"Pardon, M. Dagobert!" said Loony, throwing himself on his knees, and clasping his hands with an air of idiotic entreaty.

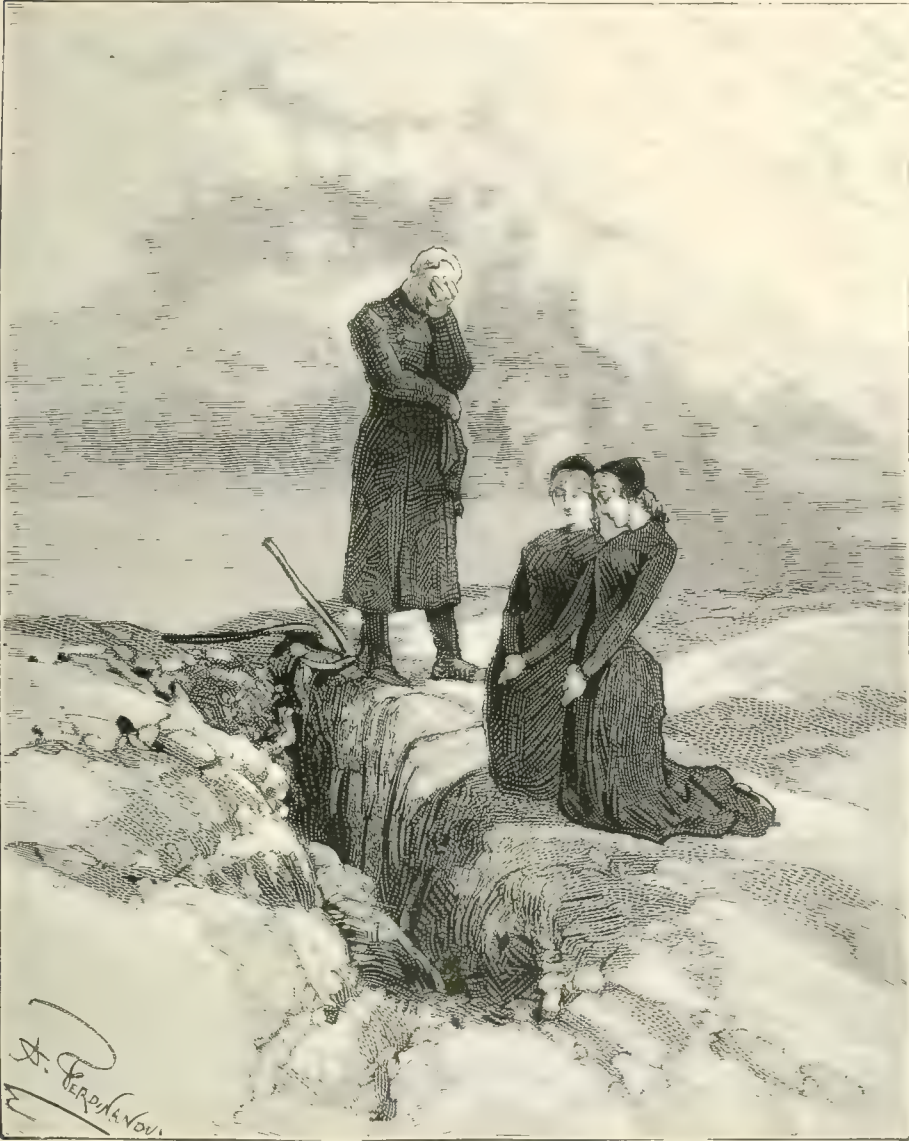
"Leave the room! — and you too!" added the soldier, with a menacing gesture, as he turned toward Rodin, who had already approached the girls with a paternal smile on his countenance.

"I am at your orders, my dear sir," said the priest humbly; and he made a low bow, but without stirring from the spot.

"Will you go?" cried the soldier to Loony, who was still kneeling, and who, thanks to the advantages of this position, was able to utter a certain number of words before Dagobert could remove him.

"M. Dagobert," said Loony, in a doleful voice, "I beg pardon for

bringing up the gentleman without leave ; but, alas ! my head is turned because of the misfortune that happened to Madame Augustine !”



“What misfortune ?” cried Rose and Blanche together, as they advanced anxiously toward Loony.

“Will you go ?” thundered Dagobert, shaking the servant by the collar, to force him to rise.

"Speak—speak!" said Blanche, interposing between the soldier and his prey. "What has happened to Madame Augustine?"

"Oh," shouted Loony, in spite of the cuffs of the soldier. "Madame Augustine was attacked in the night with cholera, and taken——"

He was unable to finish. Dagobert struck him a tremendous blow with his fist right on the jaw, and, putting forth his still formidable strength, the old horse-grenadier lifted him to his legs, and with one violent kick bestowed on the lower part of his back sent him rolling into the antechamber.

Then, turning to Rodin, with flushed cheek and sparkling eye, Dagobert pointed to the door with an expressive gesture, and said in an angry voice: "Now, be off with you—or it will be your turn next!"

"I must pay my respects another time, my dear sir," said Rodin, as he retired toward the door, bowing to the young girls.

CHAPTER XLVIII

DUTY

RODIN, retreating slowly before the fire of Dagobert's angry looks, walked backward to the door, casting oblique but piercing glances on the orphans, who were visibly affected by the servant's intentional indiscretion. (Dagobert had ordered him not to speak before the girls of the illness of their governess, and that was quite enough to induce the simpleton to take the first opportunity of doing so.)

Rose hastily approached the soldier, and said to him :

"Is it true—is it really true, that poor Madame Augustine has been attacked with the cholera ?"

"No—I do not know—I cannot tell," replied the soldier, hesitating ;
"besides, what is it to you ?"

"Dagobert, you would conceal from us a calamity," said Blanche. "I remember now your embarrassment when we spoke to you of our governess."

"If she is ill we ought not to abandon her. She had pity on our sorrows ; we ought to pity her sufferings."

"Come, sister ; come to her room," said Blanche, advancing toward the door, where Rodin had stopped short, and stood listening with growing attention to this unexpected scene, which seemed to give him ample food for thought.

"You will not leave this room," said the soldier sternly, addressing the two sisters.

"Dagobert," replied Rose firmly, "it is a sacred duty, and it would be cowardice not to fulfill it."

"I tell you that you shall not leave the room," said the soldier, stamping his foot with impatience.

"Dagobert," replied Blanche, with as resolute an air as her sister's, and with a kind of enthusiasm which brought the blood to her fair cheek, "our father, when he left us, gave us an admirable example of

devotion and duty. He would not forgive us were we to forget the lesson."

"What!" cried Dagobert, in a rage, and advancing toward the sisters to prevent their quitting the apartment; "you think that if your governess had the cholera I would let you go to her under the pretext of duty? Your duty is to live, to live happy, for your father's sake—and for mine into the bargain—so not a word more of such folly!"

"We can run no danger by going to our governess in her room," said Rose.

"And if there were danger," added Blanche, "we ought not to hesitate. So, Dagobert, be good, and let us pass."

Rodin, who had listened to what precedes with sustained attention, suddenly started as if a thought had struck him; his eye shone brightly, and an expression of fatal joy illumined his countenance.

"Dagobert, do not refuse," said Blanche. "You would do for us what you reproach us with wishing to do for another."

Dagobert had, as it were, till now stood in the path of the Jesuit and the twins, by keeping close to the door; but, after a moment's reflection, he shrugged his shoulders, stepped on one side, and said calmly:

"I was an old fool. Come, young ladies; if you find Madame Augustine in the house, I will allow you to remain with her."

Surprised at these words, the girls stood motionless and irresolute.

"If our governess is not here, where is she, then?"

"You think, perhaps, that I am going to tell you, in the excitement in which you are!"

"She is dead!" cried Rose, growing pale.

"No, no—be calm," said the soldier hastily; "I swear to you, by your father's honor, that she is not dead. At the first appearance of the disorder, she begged to be removed from the house, fearing the contagion for those in it."

"Good and courageous woman!" said Rose tenderly. "And you will not allow us——"

"I will not allow you to go out, even if I have to lock you up in your room," cried the soldier, again stamping with rage; then remembering that the blunderhead's indiscretion was the sole cause of this unfortunate incident, he added, with concentrated fury:

"Oh! I will break my stick upon that rascal's back."

So saying, he turned toward the door, where Rodin still stood, silent and attentive, dissembling with habitual impassibility the fatal hopes he had just conceived in his brain.

The girls, no longer doubting the removal of their governess, and

convinced that Dagobert would not tell them whither they had conveyed her, remained pensive and sad.

At sight of the priest, whom he had forgotten for the moment, the soldier's rage increased, and he said to him roughly:

"Are you still there?"

"I would merely observe to you, my dear sir," said Rodin, with that air of perfect good-nature which he knew so well how to assume, "that you were standing before the door, which naturally prevented me from going out."

"Well, now nothing prevents you — so file off."

"Certainly, I will file off, if you wish it, my dear sir; though I think I have some reason to be surprised at such a reception."

"It is no reception at all — so begone."

"I had come, my dear sir, to speak to you —"

"I have no time for talking."

"Upon business of great importance."

"I have no other business of importance than to remain with these children."

"Very good, my dear sir," said Rodin, pausing on the threshold. "I will not disturb you any longer; excuse my indiscretion. The bearer of excellent news from Marshal Simon, I came——"

"News from our father?" cried Rose, drawing nearer to Rodin.

"Oh, speak, speak, sir!" added Blanche.

"You have news of the marshal?" said Dagobert, glancing suspiciously at Rodin. "Pray, what is this news?"

But Rodin, without immediately answering the question, returned from the threshold into the room, and contemplating Rose and Blanche by turns with admiration, he resumed:

"What happiness for me, to be able to bring some pleasure to these dear young ladies! They are even as I left them, graceful, and fair, and charming—only less sad than on the day when I fetched them from the gloomy convent in which they were kept prisoners, to restore them to the arms of their glorious father."

"That was their place, and this is not yours," said Dagobert harshly, still holding the door open behind Rodin.

"Confess, at least, that I was not so much out of place at Dr. Balcinier's," said the Jesuit, with a cunning air. "You know, for it was there that I restored to you the noble imperial cross you so much regretted—the day when that good Mademoiselle de Cardoville only prevented you from strangling me by telling you that I was her liberator. Aye, it was just as I have the honor of stating, young ladies," added Rodin, with a smile; "this brave soldier was very near strangling me, for, be

it said without offense, he has, in spite of his age, a grasp of iron. Ha, ha! the Prussians and Cossacks must know that better than I."

These few words reminded Dagobert and the twins of the services which Rodin had really rendered them; and though the marshal had heard Mademoiselle de Cardoville speak of Rodin as of a very dangerous man, he had forgotten, in the midst of so many anxieties, to communicate this circumstance to Dagobert. But this latter, warned by experience, felt, in spite of favorable appearances, a secret aversion for the Jesuit; so he replied abruptly:

"The strength of my grasp has nothing to do with the matter."

"If I allude to that little innocent playfulness on your part, my dear sir," said Rodin, in the softest tone, approaching the two sisters with a wriggle which was peculiar to him; "if I allude to it, you see, it was suggested by the involuntary recollection of the little services I was happy enough to render you."

Dagobert looked fixedly at Rodin, who instantly veiled his glance beneath his flabby eyelids.

"First of all," said the soldier, after a moment's silence, "a true man never speaks of the services he has rendered, and you come back three times to the subject."

"But, Dagobert," whispered Rose, "if he bring news of our father?"

The soldier made a sign, as if to beg the girl to let him speak, and resumed, looking full at Rodin:

"You are cunning, but I'm no raw recruit."

"I cunning?" said Rodin, with a sanctified air.

"Yes, very. You think to puzzle me with your fine phrases; but I'm not to be caught in that way. Just listen to me. Some of your black-gowns stole my cross; you returned it to me. Some of the same band carried off these children; you brought them back. It is also true that you denounced the renegade D'Aigrigny. But all this only proves two things: first, that you were vile enough to be the accomplice of these scoundrels; and secondly, that, having been their accomplice, you were base enough to betray them. Now those two facts are equally bad, and I suspect you most furiously. So march off at once; your presence is not good for these children."

"But, my dear sir——"

"I will have no buts," answered Dagobert, in an angry voice. "When a man of your look does good, it is only to hide some evil; and one must be on guard."

"I understand your suspicion," said Rodin coolly, hiding his growing disappointment, for he had hoped it would have been easy to coax the soldier; "but, if you reflect, what interest have I in deceiving you, and in what should the deception consist?"

"You have some interest or other in persisting to remain here when I tell you to go away."

"I have already had the honor of informing you of the object of my visit, my dear sir."

"To bring news of Marshal Simon?"

"That is exactly the case. I am happy enough to have news of the marshal. Yes, my dear young ladies," added Rodin, as he again approached the two sisters, to recover, as it were, the ground he had lost, "I have news of your glorious father."

"Then come to my room directly, and you can tell it to me," replied Dagobert.

"What, you would be cruel enough to deprive these dear ladies of the pleasure——"

"By Heaven, sir!" cried Dagobert, in a voice of thunder, "you will make me forget myself. I should be sorry to fling a man of your age down the stairs. Will you be gone?"

"Well, well," said Rodin mildly, "do not be angry with a poor old man. I am really not worth the trouble. I will go with you to your room and tell you what I have to communicate. You will repent not having let me speak before these dear young ladies; but that will be your punishment, naughty man."

So saying, Rodin again bowed very low, and, concealing his rage and vexation, left the room before Dagobert, who made a sign to the two sisters and then followed, closing the door after him.

"What news of our father, Dagobert?" said Rose anxiously, when the soldier returned after a quarter of an hour's absence.

"Well, that old conjuror knows that the marshal set out in good spirits, and he seems acquainted with M. Robert. How could he be informed of all this? I cannot tell," added the soldier, with a thoughtful air; "but it is only another reason to be on one's guard against him."

"But what news of our father?" asked Rose.

"One of that old rascal's friends (I think him a rascal still) knows your father, he tells me, and met him five-and-twenty leagues from here. Knowing that this man was coming to Paris, the marshal charged him to let you know that he was in perfect health, and hoped soon to see you again."

"Oh, what happiness!" cried Rose.

"You see you were wrong to suspect the poor old man, Dagobert," added Blanche. "You treated him so harshly."

"Possibly so; but I am not sorry for it."

"And why?"

"I have my reasons; and one of the best is that, when I saw him

come in and go sidling and creeping round about us, I felt chilled to the marrow of my bones without knowing why. Had I seen a serpent crawling toward you I should not have been more frightened. I knew, of course, that he could not hurt you in my presence; but I tell you, my children, in spite of the services he has no doubt rendered us, it was all I could do to refrain from throwing him out of the window. Now, this manner of proving my gratitude is not natural, and one must be on one's guard against people who inspire us with such ideas."

"Good Dagobert, it is your affection for us that makes you so suspicious," said Rose, in a coaxing tone; "it proves how much you love us."

"How you love your children!" added Blanche, approaching Dagobert, with a glance of intelligence at her sister, as if they were about to execute a plot laid in the absence of the soldier.

The latter, who was in one of his suspicious moods, looked at the orphans by turns, and then, shaking his head, replied:

"Ha! you know how to coax me. You have something to ask for."

"Well, yes. You know we never deceive you," said Rose.

"Come, Dagobert — be just, that is all," added Blanche.

And both approaching the soldier, who had remained standing, they rested their clasped hands upon his shoulders, and looked at him with the sweetest and most seductive smile.

"Come, speak out!" said Dagobert, glancing from one to the other, "I have only to hold firm. It is something very difficult to get, I am sure."

"Listen! You that are so good, brave, and just — you that have sometimes praised us for acting like a soldier's daughters ——"

"To the point! to the point!" said Dagobert, who began to feel uneasy at these oratorical precautions.

The young girls were about to speak when a knock was heard at the door. The lesson which Dagobert had given to Loony — he had just turned him out of the house — had produced a salutary effect.

"Who is there?" said Dagobert.

"It is Justin, M. Dagobert," replied a voice.

"Come in."

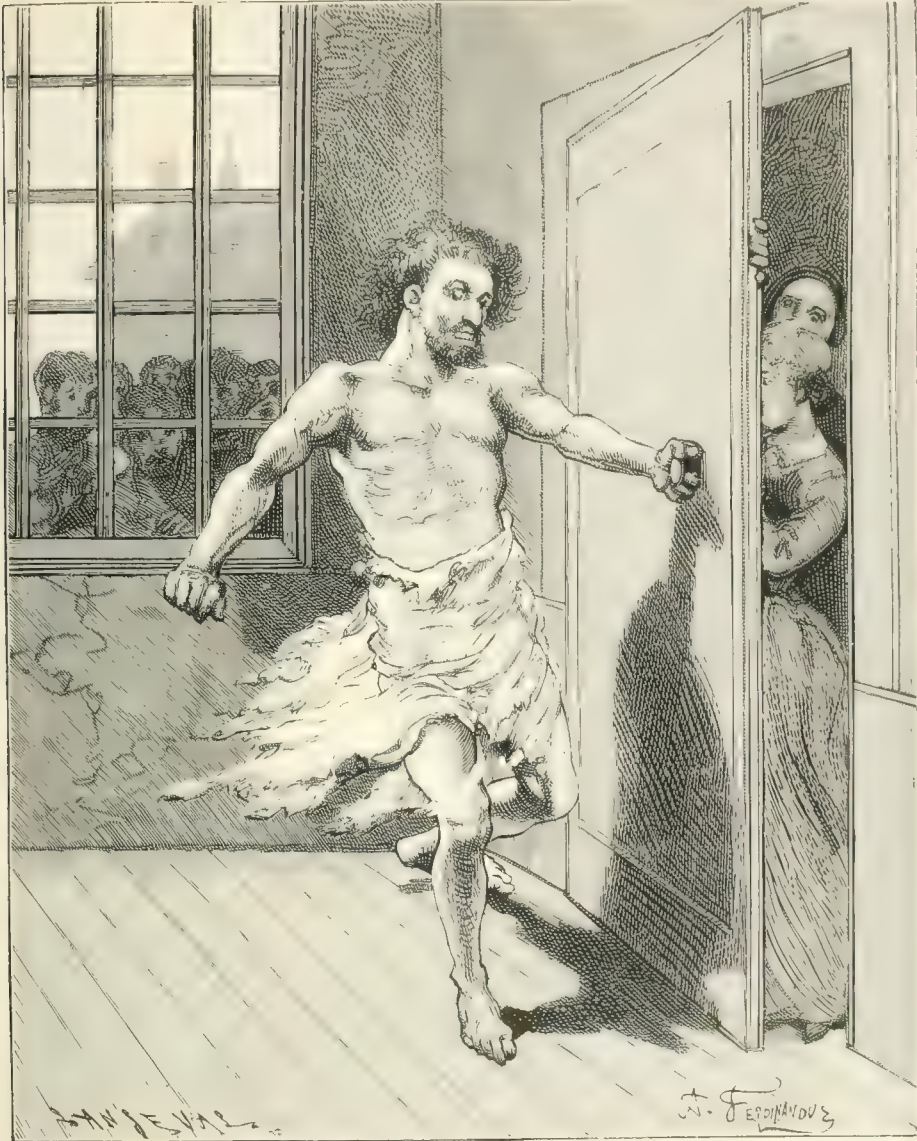
A servant of the house, an honest and faithful person, appeared at the door.

"What is it?" said the soldier.

"M. Dagobert," replied Justin, "there is a lady in her carriage at the door. She sent her footman to ask if she could speak to the duke or the young ladies. She was told that the duke was not at home, but that the young ladies were. Then she said that she wished to see them about a collection for charity."

"Did you see the lady? What is her name?"

"She did not give her name, M. Dagobert, but she looks like a great lady, and has a superb carriage and servants in fine liveries."



"The lady comes to make a collection," said Rose to Dagobert; "it is no doubt for the poor. They told her we were at home, and I do not see how we can refuse to see her."

"What do you think, Dagobert?" said Blanche.

"Well, a lady — that is quite another thing. It's not like the old conjuror we had here just now," said the soldier. "Besides, I shall remain with you."

Then turning to Justin, he added:

"Ask the lady to walk up."

The servant withdrew.

"What, Dagobert! You even suspect this lady, whom you do not know?"

"Listen to me, my children. I had no reason to suspect my worthy wife, had I? And yet she gave you up to the black-gowns, without knowing that she was doing any harm, and only in obedience to her scoundrel of a confessor."

"Poor woman, that is true. And yet she loved us very much," said Rose thoughtfully.

"When did you hear of her last?" said Blanche.

"The day before yesterday. She is getting better and better. The air of the country, in which Gabriel has his curacy, is favorable to her, and she is keeping his house till he returns."

At this moment the door of the room was thrown wide open, and the Princess de Saint-Dizier entered with a respectful courtesy. She held in her hand one of those red velvet bags used in the churches to collect money.

CHAPTER XLIX

THE COLLECTION

WE have said that the Princess de Saint-Dizier knew how to assume, when it was required, the most attractive manners and the utmost apparent tenderness. Having preserved some of the gallant habits of her youth, with a coaxing and singularly insinuating address, she applied them to the prosecution of her pious intrigues, even as she had formerly used them to insure the success of love-affairs. Her fashionable air was mingled at times with an assumption of cordial simplicity, which gave to Madame de Saint-Dizier an appearance of goodness that added greatly to the effect of her seductions.

Such was the character in which the princess presented herself to Marshal Simon's daughters and to Dagobert.

With her gown of gray silk well tightened, so as to conceal as much as possible her too full figure, she wore a hood of black velvet, which, with numerous curls of light hair, set off to advantage a countenance that was still agreeable, in spite of its double chin; while a look of charming amenity and a graceful smile, which displayed her very white teeth, gave her an expression of the most amiable benevolence.

Dagobert, notwithstanding his ill-humor, Rose and Blanche, notwithstanding their timidity, felt themselves at once predisposed in favor of Madame de Saint-Dizier.

The latter, advancing toward the young girls, saluted them with the utmost grace, and said to them in her most unctuous tone:

"I believe I have the honor of speaking to Mesdemoiselles de Ligny."

Rose and Blanche, little accustomed to hear themselves called by their father's title, blushed, and looked timidly at each other without answering.

Dagobert, wishing to relieve their embarrassment, said to the princess:

"Yes, madame, these young ladies are the daughters of Marshal Simon, but they are generally called simply by the family name."

"I am not surprised at it, sir," answered the princess, "for I should have expected such amiable modesty to be one of the distinguishing qualities of the daughters of Marshal Simon; they will excuse me for having addressed them by the glorious title which recalls the immortal memory of one of their father's most brilliant victories."

At these kind and flattering words, Rose and Blanche looked gratefully at Madame de Saint-Dizier, while Dagobert, proud and happy at the praise bestowed on the marshal and his children, felt a rising confidence in the lady-collector.

The latter resumed, in a tone of touching emotion:

"I come to you, young ladies, with full trust in the examples of noble generosity given you by the marshal, to implore your charity in favor of the victims of the cholera. I am one of the patronesses of an institution for their benefit, and whatever assistance you can give, ladies, will be received with lively gratitude."

"We ought to feel grateful to you, madame, for having thought of us for this good work," said Blanche gracefully.

"Permit me, madame," added Rose, "to leave you for a moment to fetch what we can spare for this purpose."

And, having exchanged a glance with her sister, the young girl went into the adjoining bedroom.

"Madame," said Dagobert respectfully, more and more under the influence of the seductive words and manners of the princess, "do us the honor to take a seat, while Rose is looking for her little savings."

Then the soldier added hastily, as he advanced a seat for the princess:

"You will excuse, madame, if I say *Rose*, in talking of one of Marshal Simon's daughters,—but I was present at the birth of these children —"

"And next to our father we have no more tender and devoted friend than Dagobert, madame," added Blanche, addressing the princess.

"I can readily believe it, mademoiselle," answered the latter, "for you and your charming sister appear worthy of such devotion—a devotion," continued the princess, turning toward Dagobert, "as honorable to those who inspire as to those who feel it."

"Faith! yes, madame," said Dagobert; "I am honored and flattered enough by it, and with good reason too. But here comes Rose with her hoard."

In fact, the young girl now reëntered the room, bringing with her a green silk purse, tolerably well filled. She delivered it to the princess,

who had already turned her head several times toward the door, as if she expected the arrival of some person who did not yet make his appearance; but this movement was lost upon Dagobert.

"We only wish, madame," said Rose to the Princess de Saint-Dizier, "that we could offer you more. But this purse contains all we possess."

"What, gold!" said the princess, as she saw several *louis* glittering through the network of the purse. "Really, young ladies, your *modest* offering is a very generous one. But no doubt," she added, as she looked affectionately at the young girls, "this sum was meant to be expended on your dress or trinkets — and you are imposing on yourselves privations which are often so painful at your age."

"I assure you, madame," said Rose, with embarrassment, "that this offering is by no means a privation."

"Well! I believe you," answered the princess graciously. "You are too pretty to need the superfluous resources of the toilet, and your souls are too generous not to prefer the enjoyment of charity to every other pleasure."

"Madame ——"

"Yes, yes, young ladies," said Madame de Saint-Dizier, with a smile, and assuming the air of what is called a *good sort of woman*; "do not be confused by these praises. I am too old to flatter, and I speak to you as a mother — or I might say a grandmother — for I should do very well for that."

"We shall be perfectly satisfied, madame, if our contribution serves to relieve only a few of the woes in which you take such interest," said Rose; "they must, no doubt, be very fearful."

"Oh, very fearful," answered the princess mournfully. "But what consoles one a little in the midst of such calamities is to see the interest and the pity which are felt in all classes of society. In my employment as a collector, I am able to appreciate many acts of noble devotion, and these also are in a manner contagious — for ——"

"Do you hear, young ladies," cried Dagobert triumphantly, interrupting the princess, to give a meaning to her words favorable to his opposition to the desire of the sisters to visit their sick governess, "do you hear what this lady says, that devotion is in itself contagious! Now there is nothing worse than contagion ——"

The soldier had not time to finish, for a servant entered the room and informed him that somebody wanted to speak to him directly.

The princess perfectly dissembled the pleasure she felt at this incident, which she had prepared beforehand, and which was to separate Dagobert for a time from the two girls.

Dagobert, vexed at being obliged to leave the room, said to the princess as he rose, with a meaning look :

"I am obliged to you, madame, for your good advice about the contagion of devotion. So, before going, pray give them a few more words on that head. You will render a great service to these young ladies, to their father, and to myself. I will come back presently, madame, to thank you once more."

Then, approaching the two sisters, Dagobert whispered to them :

"Listen to this good lady, my children ; you cannot do better."

And, bowing respectfully to the princess, he went out.

The soldier once gone, the princess said to the young girls, in a calm tone, and with perfect ease of manner, though she burned with anxiety to take advantage of the momentary absence of Dagobert, so as to execute the instructions she had just received from Rodin :

"I did not exactly understand the last words of your old friend, or rather, I think he did not quite comprehend my meaning. When I spoke just now of the generous contagion of devotion, I was far from blaming that sentiment, for which I feel, on the contrary, the highest admiration."

"Oh, yes, madame," said Rose warmly. "It is thus that we understood your words."

"If you knew, madame, how applicable they are just now!" added Blanche, as she looked at her sister with an air of intelligence.

"I was sure that hearts like yours would understand me," resumed the princess. "No doubt all devotion is contagious ; but then it is a generous and heroic contagion. If you knew how many touching and amiable acts I every day witness, and how many deeds of courage make me thrill with enthusiasm ! Yes, yes ; glory and praise to the Almighty," added Madame de Saint-Dizier, with pious fervor, "all ranks and classes have united in zeal and Christian charity. Ah, if you saw, in the hospitals which have been established to afford immediate aid to persons attacked by the contagion, what emulation of benevolence ! Rich and poor, young and old, women of every condition, crowding round the unfortunate patients, and regarding it as a favor to be admitted to the pious honor of attending, encouraging, and consoling so many unhappy creatures !"

"And it is for strangers that so many courageous persons display this lively interest !" said Rose, addressing her sister in a tone of admiration.

"Certainly," answered the princess. "Only yesterday I was moved to tears. I was visiting a temporary hospital, quite close to your house. One of the rooms was almost entirely filled with poor creatures, who

had been brought there in a dying state. Presently I saw a lady, one of my friends, accompanied by her two daughters,—young, charming, charitable as you are,—enter the apartment, and all three, like humble servants of the Lord, offer themselves to the doctors to aid in nursing the poor patients.”

The two sisters exchanged a look impossible to describe, on hearing these words of the princess — words perfidiously designed to excite to heroism the generous instincts of the young girls; for Rodin had not forgotten their deep emotion on learning the sudden illness of their governess. The rapid penetration of the Jesuit had instantly seized this incident, and he had immediately enjoined on Madame de Saint-Dizier to act accordingly.

The princess looked therefore attentively at the orphans, to judge of the effect of her words, and thus continued:

“You may suppose that foremost in the mission of charity we behold the ministers of religion. This very morning, in the establishment hard by of which I have been speaking, I was, like many others, struck with admiration at the sight of a young priest—I should rather say an angel!—who seemed as if descended from above to bring to those poor women the ineffable consolations of religion. Oh, yes; this young priest is indeed an angelic being—for had you seen him, as I did, in that painful situation, you would yourselves own that the Abbé Gabriel ——”

“The Abbé Gabriel!” cried the young girls together, exchanging a glance of surprise and joy.

“You know him, then?” asked the princess, in feigned astonishment.

“Know him, madame! He saved our lives! In a shipwreck in which we should have both perished without his aid.”

“The Abbé Gabriel saved your lives?” said Madame de Saint-Dizier, appearing more and more astonished. “Are you quite sure it is the same?”

“Oh! yes, madame. You speak of his admirable and devoted courage. It can only be he.”

“Besides,” added Rose ingenuously, “Gabriel is easily recognized. He is beautiful as an archangel.”

“He has long, fair hair,” added Blanche.

“And blue eyes, so mild and good that it moves one to look at them,” added Rose.

“There can be no doubt of its being the same,” resumed the princess; “and, if so, you will understand the veneration felt for him, and the incredible ardor of charity that his example inspires. Ah, if you had heard, only this morning, with what tender admiration he spoke to the

generous women who had, as he said, the noble courage to nurse and console other women, their sisters in this asylum of misery! Alas, I know that religion commands humility and modesty; but I confess that as I listened to the Abbé Gabriel I could not altogether repress a kind of pious pride. In spite of myself, I took my own little share in the praises addressed to these women, who, to use his touching expression, found a sister in every poor patient by whose side they knelt down to administer assistance."

"Do you hear, sister?" said Blanche to Rose, with intense excitement. "How proud one must be to deserve such praise as that!"

"Yes, yes," cried the princess, with studied enthusiasm; "one may well be proud of it, for it is in the name of humanity, it is in the name of Heaven, that such praise is bestowed, and God himself seems to speak by the mouth of his minister!"

"Madame," said Rose warmly, for her heart beat with enthusiasm at the words of the princess, "we have no mother; our father is absent; you have so kind a soul, so noble a heart, that we cannot do better than address ourselves to you to ask your advice."

"What advice, my dear child?" said Madame de Saint-Dizier, in an insinuating voice. "Yes, *my dear child*—let me call you by that name—for it becomes both your age and mine."

"We shall be happy to receive that name from you, madame," replied Blanche; then she added: "We had a governess who always showed us the greatest affection. Last night she was attacked with cholera."

"Good Heaven!" said the princess, feigning the kindest interest. "And how is she now?"

"Alas, madame, we do not know."

"What! you have not yet seen her?"

"Do not accuse us of indifference or ingratitude, madame," said Blanche sadly; "it is no fault of ours that we are not with our governess."

"And who prevents you from seeing her?"

"Dagobert, our old friend, that you saw here just now."

"Indeed! Why does he prevent you from performing a duty of gratitude?"

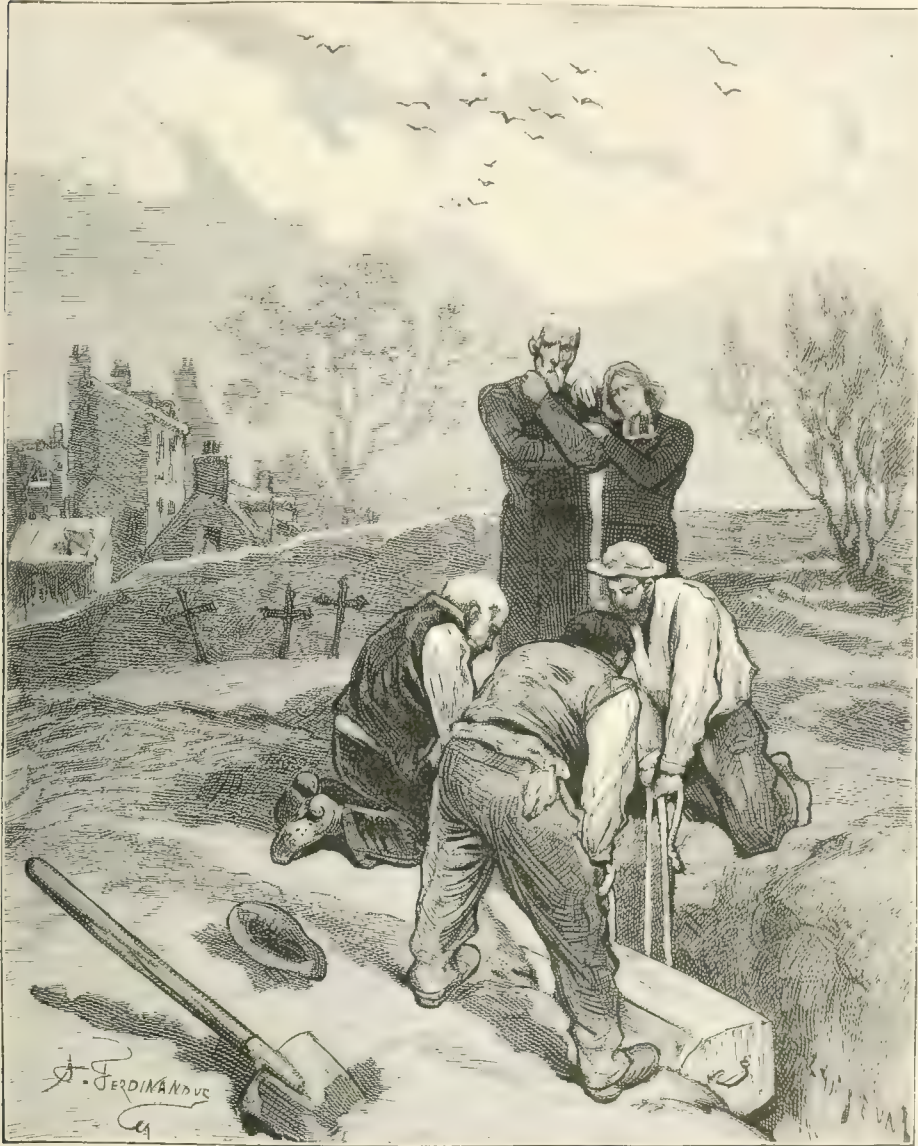
"It is true, then, madame, that our duty would lead us to go to her?"

Madame de Saint-Dizier looked from one young girl to the other as if in the utmost astonishment, and then said:

"You ask me if it is your duty? You, with your generous dispositions, you ask me such a question?"

"Our first idea was to fly to our governess, madame, I assure you. But Dagobert loves us so much that he is always frightened about us."

"And then," added Rose, "my father intrusted us to his care; and in his tender solicitude he exaggerates the danger to which we should perhaps be exposed in going to see our governess."



"The scruples of this excellent man are excusable," said the princess; "but his fears are, as you say, exaggerated. For many days I have visited these hospitals. Many ladies, friends of mine, do the same, and, up to this moment, we have not felt the least symptom of the disease."

Besides, it is not contagious; that is now proved; so pray have no fears on that score."

"Whether there be any danger or no, madame," said Rose, "our duty bids us visit our governess."

"I think so, my children. Otherwise she might accuse you of ingratitude and cowardice. And then," added Madame de Saint-Dizier piously, "it is not enough to merit the esteem of the world; we should also strive to gain the favor of Heaven, for ourselves and for those we love. Thus, you have had the misfortune to lose your mother, is it not so?"

"Alas! yes, madame."

"Well, then, my children, though we would fain hope that her place is in paradise—for she made a Christian end, did she not?—She received the last sacraments of the Holy Mother Church?" added the princess by way of parenthesis.

"We lived in the depths of Siberia, in a desert, madame," replied Rose mournfully. "Our mother died of cholera, and there was no priest near."

"Is it possible?" cried the princess, with an air of alarm. "Your poor mother died without the assistance of a minister of religion?"

"My sister and I watched beside the corpse, and prayed for her—as well as we could," said Rose, her eyes bathed in tears; "then Dagobert dug the grave where she lies."

"Ah, my dear children!" said the princess, pretending to be quite overcome with grief.

"What is the matter, madame?" exclaimed the affrighted sisters.

"Alas; your excellent mother—notwithstanding all her virtues—cannot have yet entered paradise!"

"What do you tell us, madame?"

"Unfortunately, she died without receiving the sacraments, so that her soul is no doubt wandering through purgatory, waiting the hour of the Lord's mercy—and this deliverance may be hastened by the prayers offered up in the churches for suffering souls!"

Madame de Saint-Dizier assumed an expression of such deep sorrow as she pronounced these words, and the young girls had been so tenderly attached to their mother, that, in their simplicity, they believed in the terrors of the princess, and reproached themselves with not having known, till now, these peculiarities of purgatory.

The princess, seeing the expression of deep sadness which spread itself over the countenance of the sisters, on whom her hypocritical pretenses had produced this effect, added:

"But you must not despair, my children. Sooner or later the Lord

will receive your mother into heaven. Besides, it is in your power to hasten the deliverance of that beloved soul."

"In ours, madame?—Oh! tell us, we entreat you, for you have made us tremble for our mother."

"Poor children! how interesting they are!" said the princess affectionately, as she pressed the hands of the sisters in her own. "Be comforted," she added; "you can do a great deal for your mother. Yes, better than any one, you can obtain for her a speedy release from purgatory and admission to everlasting bliss."

"We, madame? How can we do so?"

"By deserving the favor of Heaven. Thus, for example, you may render yourselves acceptable to the Lord by this act of devotion and gratitude toward your governess. Yes, I feel certain that this proof of Christian zeal, as the blessed Abbé Gabriel says, would be accepted by Heaven as efficacious for the deliverance of your mother, since, in his great mercy, the Lord always receives favorably the prayers of children for their parents, and bestows his blessing on noble and pious actions."

"Ah! it is not then of our governess only that we have to think," cried Blanche.

"Here is Dagobert," said Rose suddenly, listening to the sound of the soldier's footsteps as he ascended the stairs.

"Recover yourselves—be calm—say nothing of all this to that excellent man," said the princess hastily. "It would only make him uneasy without a cause, and perhaps put obstacles in the way of your generous resolution."

"But how shall we manage, madame, to find out where our governess is?" asked Rose.

"We will contrive all that—leave it to me," said the princess, in a low voice. "I will visit you again, and we will conspire together. Yes, we will conspire to release the soul of your poor mother."

Hardly had the princess uttered these last words with a sanctified air when the soldier entered the room, radiant with joy.

In his delight he perceived not the emotion of the two sisters, which at first they were unable to dissemble.

Madame de Saint-Dizier, wishing to draw off the attention of the soldier, said to him as she rose from her seat:

"I could not take leave of these young ladies, sir, without expressing to you all the pleasure I have felt in becoming acquainted with their rare qualities."

"What you say, madame, doesn't surprise me; but I'm not the less

pleased at it. I hope you have given them a good lecture about the contagion of devotion."

"Be satisfied, sir," said the princess, exchanging a glance of intelligence with the two young girls. "I have told them all that was necessary, and we now understand each other."

These words completely satisfied Dagobert ; and Madame de Saint-Dizier, after taking a most affectionate leave of the orphans, returned to her carriage and hastened to rejoin Rodin, who was waiting in his hackney-coach at a little distance to learn the result of this interview.

CHAPTER I.

THE IMPROVISED HOSPITAL.

AMONG a great number of temporary hospitals opened at the time of the cholera in every quarter of Paris, one had been established on the ground-floor of a large house in the Rue du Mont-Blanc. The vacant apartments had been generously placed by their proprietor at the disposal of the authorities; and to this place were carried a number of persons who, being suddenly attacked with the contagion, were considered in too dangerous a state to be removed to the principal hospitals.

Two days had elapsed since Rodin's visit to Marshal Simon's daughters.

It was about ten o'clock in the morning. The persons who had watched during the night by the sick people in the hospital established in the Rue du Mont-Blanc were about to be relieved by other voluntary assistants.

"Well, gentlemen," said one of those newly arrived, "how are we getting on? Has there been any decrease last night in the number of the sick?"

"Unfortunately, no; but the doctors think the contagion has reached its height."

"Then there is some hope of seeing it decrease."

"And have any of the gentlemen whose places we come to take been attacked by the disease?"

"We came eleven strong last night; we are only nine now."

"That is bad. Were these two persons taken off rapidly?"

"One of the victims, a young man of twenty-five years of age, a cavalry officer on furlough, was struck, as it were, by lightning. In less than a quarter of an hour he was dead. Though such facts are frequent, we were speechless with horror."

"Poor young man!"

"He had a word of cordial encouragement and hope for every one. He had so far succeeded in raising the spirits of the patients, that some

of them, who were less affected by the cholera than by the fear of it, were able to quit the hospital nearly well."

"What a pity! So good a young man. Well, he died gloriously; it requires as much courage as on the field of battle."

"He had only one rival in zeal and courage, and that is a young priest, with an angelic countenance, whom they call the Abbé Gabriel. He is indefatigable; he hardly takes an hour's rest, but runs from one to the other, and offers himself to everybody. He forgets nothing. The consolations which he offers come from the depths of his soul, and are not mere formalities in the way of his profession. No, no, I saw him weep over a poor woman, whose eyes he had closed after a dreadful agony. Oh, if all priests were like him!"

"No doubt, a good priest is most worthy of respect. But who is the other victim of last night?"

"Oh! his death was frightful. Do not speak of it. I have still the horrible scene before my eyes."

"A sudden attack of cholera?"

"If it had only been the contagion, I should not so shudder at the remembrance."

"What then did he die of?"

"It is a string of horrors. Three days ago they brought here a man who was supposed to be only attacked with cholera. You have no doubt heard speak of this personage. He is the lion-tamer that drew all Paris to the Porte Saint-Martin."

"I know the man you mean. Called Morok. He performed a kind of play with a tame panther."

"Exactly so; I was myself present at a similar scene, in which a stranger, an Indian, in consequence of a wager, it was said at the time, jumped upon the stage and killed the panther."

"Well, this Morok, brought here as a cholera-patient, and indeed with all the symptoms of the contagion, soon showed signs of a still more frightful malady."

"And this was——"

"Hydrophobia."

"Did he become mad?"

"Yes; he confessed that he had been bitten a few days before by one of the mastiffs in his menagerie; unfortunately, we only learnt this circumstance after the terrible attack which cost the life of the poor fellow we deplore."

"How did it happen, then?"

"Morok was in a room with three other patients. Suddenly seized with a sort of furious delirium, he rose, uttering ferocious cries, and

rushed raving mad into the passage. Our poor friend made an attempt to stop him. This kind of resistance increased the frenzy of Morok, who threw himself on the man that crossed his path, and, tearing him with his teeth, fell down in horrible convulsions."

"Oh! you are right. 'Twas indeed frightful. And, notwithstanding every assistance, this victim of Morok's ——"

"Died during the night in dreadful agony; for the shock had been so violent that brain-fever almost instantly declared itself."

"And is Morok dead?"

"I do not know. He was to be taken to another hospital, after being fast bound in the state of weakness which generally succeeds the fit. But, till he can be removed, he has been confined in a room upstairs."

"But he cannot recover."

"I should think he must be dead by this time. The doctors did not give him twenty-four hours to live."

The persons engaged in this conversation were standing in an antechamber on the ground-floor, in which usually assembled those who came to offer their voluntary aid to the sick. One door of this room communicated with the rest of the hospital and the other with the passage that opened upon the court-yard.

"Dear me!" said one of the two speakers, looking through the window. "See what two charming girls have just got out of that elegant carriage. How much alike they are. Such a resemblance is indeed extraordinary."

"No doubt they are twins. Poor young girls! dressed in mourning. They have perhaps lost father or mother."

"One would imagine they are coming this way."

"Yes, they are coming up the steps."

And, indeed, Rose and Blanche soon entered the antechamber with a timid, anxious air, though a sort of feverish excitement was visible in their looks. One of the two men that were talking together, moved by the embarrassment of the girls, advanced toward them, and said in a tone of attentive politeness:

"Is there anything I can do for you, ladies?"

"Is not this, sir," replied Rose, "the infirmary of the Rue du Mont-Blanc?"

"Yes, miss."

"A lady called Madame Augustine du Tremblay was brought here, we are told, about two days ago. Could we see her?"

"I would observe to you, miss, that there is some danger in entering the sick-wards."

"It is a dear friend that we wish to see," answered Rose, in a mild

and firm tone, which sufficiently expressed that she was determined to brave the danger.

"I cannot be sure, miss," resumed the other, "that the person you seek is here; but if you will take the trouble to walk into this room on the left, you will find there the good sister Martha; she has the care of the women's wards, and will give you all the information you can desire."

"Thank you, sir," said Blanche, with a graceful bow; and she and her sister entered together the apartment which had been pointed out to them.

"They are really charming," said the man, looking after the two sisters, who soon disappeared from his view. "It would be a great pity if ——"

He was unable to finish. A frightful tumult, mingled with cries of alarm and horror, rose suddenly from the adjoining rooms. Almost instantly two doors were thrown open, and a number of the sick, half naked, pale, fleshless, and their features convulsed with terror, rushed into the antechamber, exclaiming: "Help! help! the madman!" It is impossible to paint the scene of despairing and furious confusion which followed this panic of so many affrighted wretches, flying to the only other door to escape from the peril they dreaded, and there struggling and trampling on each other to pass through the narrow entrance.

At the moment when the last of these unhappy creatures succeeded in reaching the door, dragging himself along upon his bleeding hands, for he had been thrown down and almost crushed in the confusion — Morok, the object of so much terror — Morok himself appeared. He was a horrible sight. With the exception of a rag bound about his middle, his wan form was entirely naked, and from his bare legs still hung the remnants of the cords he had just broken. His thick, yellow hair stood almost on end, his beard bristled, his savage eyes rolled full of blood in their orbits and shone with a glassy brightness; his lips were covered with foam; from time to time he uttered hoarse, guttural cries. The veins, visible on his iron limbs, were swollen almost to bursting. He bounded like a wild beast, and stretched out before him his bony and quivering hands.

At the moment Morok reached the doorway by which those he pursued made their escape, some persons, attracted by the noise, managed to close this door from without, while others secured that which communicated with the sick-wards.

Morok thus found himself a prisoner. He ran to the window to force it open and throw himself into the court-yard. But, stopping suddenly, he drew back from the glittering panes, seized with that

invincible horror which all the victims of hydrophobia feel at the sight of any shining object, particularly glass.

The unfortunate creatures whom he had pursued saw him from the



court-yard exhausting himself in furious efforts to open the doors that had just been closed upon him. Then, perceiving the inutility of his attempts, he uttered savage cries, and rushed furiously round the room like a wild beast that seeks in vain to escape from its cage.

But suddenly those spectators of this scene who had approached nearest to the window uttered a loud exclamation of fear and anguish. Morok had perceived the little door which led to the closet occupied by Sister Martha, where Rose and Blanche had entered a few minutes before. Hoping to get out by this way, Morok drew the door violently toward him, and succeeded in half opening it, notwithstanding the resistance he experienced from the inside.

For an instant the affrighted crowd saw the stiffened arms of Sister Martha and the orphans clinging to the door and holding it back with all their might.

CHAPTER LI

HYDROPHOBIA



WHEN the sick people assembled in the court-yard saw the desperate effort of Morok to force the door of the room which contained Sister Martha and the orphans, their fright redoubled.

"It is all over with Sister Martha!" cried they.

"The door will give way."

"And the closet has no other entrance."

"There are two young girls in mourning with her."

"Come, we must not leave these poor women to encounter the madman. Follow me, friend," cried generously one of the spectators who was still blessed with health, and he rushed toward the steps to return to the antechamber.

"It's too late! It's only exposing yourself in vain," cried many persons, holding him back by force.

At this moment voices were heard exclaiming:

"Here is the Abbé Gabriel."

"He is coming downstairs. He has heard the noise."

"He is asking what is the matter."

"What will he do?"

Gabriel, occupied with a dying person in a neighboring room, had indeed just learned that Morok, having broken his bonds, had succeeded in escaping from the chamber in which he had been temporarily confined. Foreseeing the terrible dangers which might result from the escape of the lion-tamer, the missionary consulted only his courage, and hastened down in the hope of preventing greater misfortunes. In obedience to his orders, an attendant followed him, bearing a brazier full of hot cinders, on which lay several irons at a white heat, used by the doctors for cauterizing in desperate cases of cholera.

The angelic countenance of Gabriel was very pale; but calm intrepidity shone upon his noble brow. Hastily crossing the passage

and making his way through the crowd, he went straight to the ante-chamber door. As he approached it, one of the sick people said to him in a lamentable voice:

"Ah, sir! it is all over. Those who can see through the window say that Sister Martha is lost."

Gabriel made no answer, but grasped the key of the door. Before entering the room, however, he turned to the attendant, and said to him in a firm voice:

"Are the irons of a white heat?"

"Yes, sir."

"Then wait here, and be ready. As for you, my friends," he added, turning to some of the sick who shuddered with terror, "as soon as I enter, shut the door after me. I will answer for the rest. And you, friend, only bring your irons when I call."

And the young missionary turned the key in the lock. At this juncture a cry of alarm, pity, and admiration rose from every lip, and the spectators drew back from the door with an involuntary feeling of fear. Raising his eyes to heaven, as if to invoke its assistance at this terrible moment, Gabriel pushed open the door and immediately closed it behind him. He was alone with Morok.

The lion-tamer, by a last furious effort, had almost succeeded in opening the door, to which Sister Martha and the orphans were clinging in a fit of terror, uttering piercing cries. At the sound of Gabriel's footsteps Morok turned round suddenly. Then, instead of continuing his attack on the closet, he sprang with a roar and a bound upon the new-comer.

During this time Sister Martha and the orphans, not knowing the cause of the sudden retreat of their assailant, took advantage of the opportunity to close and bolt the door, and thus placed themselves in security from a new attack.

Morok, with haggard eye and teeth convulsively clenched, had rushed upon Gabriel, his hands extended to seize him by the throat. The missionary stood the shock valiantly. Guessing, at a glance, the intention of his adversary, he seized him by the wrists as he advanced, and, holding him back, bent him down violently with a vigorous hand.

For a second Morok and Gabriel remained mute, breathless, motionless, gazing on each other; then the missionary strove to conquer the efforts of the madman, who, with violent jerks, attempted to throw himself upon him, and to seize and tear him with his teeth.

Suddenly the lion-tamer's strength seemed to fail, his knees quivered, his livid head sank upon his shoulder, his eyes closed. The missionary, supposing that a momentary weakness had succeeded to

the fit of rage, and that the wretch was about to fall, relaxed his hold in order to lend him assistance. But no sooner did he feel himself at liberty, thanks to his crafty device, than Morok flung himself furiously upon Gabriel. Surprised by this sudden attack, the latter stumbled, and at once felt himself clasped in the iron arms of the madman.

Yet, with redoubled strength and energy, struggling breast to breast, foot to foot, the missionary in his turn succeeded in tripping up his adversary, and, throwing him with a vigorous effort, again seized his hands, and now held him down beneath his knee. Having thus completely mastered him, Gabriel turned his head to call for assistance, when Morok, by a desperate strain, succeeded in raising himself a little, and seized with his teeth the left arm of the missionary. At this sharp, deep, horrible bite, which penetrated to the very bone, Gabriel could not restrain a scream of anguish and horror. He strove in vain to disengage himself, for his arm was held fast, as in a vise, between the firm-set jaws of Morok.

This frightful scene had lasted less time than it has taken in the description, when suddenly the door leading to the passage was violently opened, and several courageous men, who had learned from the patients to what danger the young priest was exposed, came rushing to his assistance, in spite of his recommendation not to enter till he should call. The attendant was amongst the number, with the brazier and the hot irons. Gabriel, as soon as he perceived him, said to him, in an agitated voice:

“Quick, friend! your iron. Thank God I had thought of that.”

One of the men who had entered the room was luckily provided with a blanket; and the moment the missionary succeeded in wresting his arm from the clenched teeth of Morok, whom he still held down with his knee, this blanket was thrown over the madman's head, so that he could now be held and bound without danger, notwithstanding his desperate resistance.

Then Gabriel rose, tore open the sleeve of his cassock, and laying bare his left arm, on which a deep bite was visible, bleeding, of a bluish color, he beckoned the attendant to draw near, seized one of the hot irons, and with a firm and sure hand twice applied the burning metal to the wound, with a calm heroism which struck all the spectators with admiration. But soon so many various emotions, intrepidly sustained, were followed by a natural reaction. Large drops of sweat stood upon Gabriel's brow; his long light hair clung to his temples: he grew deadly pale, reeled, lost his senses, and was carried into the next room to receive immediate attention.

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An accidental circumstance, likely enough to occur, had converted one of the Princess de Saint-Dizier's falsehoods into a truth. To induce the orphans to go to the hospital, she had told them Gabriel was there, which at the time she was far from believing. On the contrary, she would have wished to prevent a meeting which, from the attachment of the missionary to the girls, might interfere with her projects.

A little while after the terrible scene we have just related, Rose and Blanche, accompanied by Sister Martha, entered a vast room, of a strange and fatal aspect, containing a number of women who had suddenly been seized with cholera.

These immense apartments, generously supplied for the purpose of a temporary hospital, had been furnished with excessive luxury. The room now occupied by the sick women of whom we speak had been used for a ball-room. The white panels glittered with sumptuous gilding, and magnificent pier-glasses occupied the space between the windows, through which could be seen the fresh verdure of a pleasant garden, smiling beneath the influence of budding May. In the midst of all this gilded luxury, on a rich, inlaid floor of costly woods, were seen arranged in regular order four rows of beds, of every shape and kind, from the humble truckle-bed to the handsome couch in carved mahogany.

This long room was divided into two compartments by a temporary partition, four or five feet in height. They had thus been able to manage the four rows of beds. This partition finished at some little distance from either end of the room, so as to leave an open space without beds for the volunteer attendants, when the sick did not require their aid. At one of these extremities of the room was a lofty and magnificent marble chimney-piece, ornamented with gilt bronze. On the fire beneath various drinks were brewing for the patients. To complete the singular picture, women of every class took their turns in attending upon the sick, to whose sighs and groans they always responded with consoling words of hope and pity. Such was the place, strange and mournful, that Rose and Blanche entered together, hand in hand, a short time after Gabriel had displayed such heroic courage in the struggle against Morok.

Sister Martha accompanied Marshal Simon's daughters. After speaking a few words to them in a whisper, she pointed out to them the two divisions in which the beds were arranged, and herself went to the other end of the room to give some orders.

The orphans, still under the impression of the terrible danger from which Gabriel had rescued them without their knowing it, were both excessively pale; yet their eyes were expressive of firm resolution.

They had determined not only to perform what they considered an imperative duty, but to prove themselves worthy of their valiant father; they were acting too for their mother's sake, since they had been told that, dying in Siberia without receiving the sacrament, her eternal felicity might depend on the proofs they gave of Christian devotion. Need we add that the Princess de Saint-Dizier, following the advice of Rodin, had, in a second interview skillfully brought about without the knowledge of Dagobert, taken advantage of the excitable qualities of these poor, confiding, simple, and generous souls, by a fatal exaggeration of the most noble and courageous sentiments. The orphans having asked Sister Martha if Madame Augustine du Tremblay had been brought to this asylum within the last three days, that person had answered that she really did not know, but if they would go through the women's wards it would be easy for them to ascertain. For the abominable hypocrite who, in conjunction with Rodin, had sent these two children to encounter a mortal peril, had told an impudent falsehood when she affirmed that their governess had been removed to this hospital.

During their exile and their toilsome journey with Dagobert, the sisters had been exposed to many hard trials. But never had they witnessed so sad a spectacle as that which now offered itself to their view.

The long row of beds, on which so many poor creatures writhed in agony, some uttering deep groans, some only a dull rattle in the throat, some raving in the delirium of fever, or calling on those from whom they were about to part forever—these frightful sights and sounds, which are too much even for brave men, would inevitably (such was the execrable design of Rodin and his accomplices) make a fatal impression on these young girls, urged by the most generous motives to undertake this perilous visit. And then—sad memory! which awoke, in all its deep and poignant bitterness, by the side of the first beds they came to—it was of this very malady, the cholera, that their mother had died a painful death.

Fancy the twins entering this vast room of so fearful an aspect, and, already much shaken by the terror which Morok had inspired, pursuing their search in the midst of these unfortunate creatures, whose dying pangs reminded them every instant of the dying agony of their mother!

For a moment, at sight of the funereal hall, Rose and Blanche had felt their resolution fail them. A black presentiment made them regret their heroic imprudence; and, moreover, since several minutes they had begun to feel an icy shudder and painful shootings across the temples; but, attributing these symptoms to the fright occasioned by Morok, their good and valiant natures soon stifled all these fears. They

exchanged glances of affection, their courage revived, and both of them—Rose on one side of the partition and Blanche on the other—proceeded with their painful task.

Gabriel, carried to the doctor's private room, had soon recovered his senses. Thanks to his courage and presence of mind, his wound, cauterized in time, could have no dangerous consequences. As soon as it was dressed he insisted on returning to the women's ward, where he had been offering pious consolations to a dying person at the moment they had come to inform him of the frightful danger caused by the escape of Morok.

A few minutes before the missionary entered the room, Rose and Blanche arrived almost together at the term of their mournful search, one from the left, the other from the right hand row of beds, separated by the partition which divided the hall into compartments.

The sisters had not yet seen each other. Their steps tottered as they advanced, and they were forced from time to time to lean against the beds as they passed along. Their strength was rapidly failing them. Giddy with fear and pain, they appeared to act almost mechanically. Alas! the orphans had been seized almost at the same moment with the terrible symptoms of cholera. In consequence of that species of physiological phenomenon, of which we have already spoken,—a phenomenon by no means rare in twins, which had already been displayed on one or two occasions of their sickness,—their organizations seemed liable to the same sensations, the same simultaneous accidents, like two flowers on one stem, which bloom and fade together. The sight of so much suffering and so many deaths had accelerated the development of this dreadful disease. Already, on their agitated and altered countenances, they bore the mortal tokens of the contagion as they came forth, each on her own side, from the two subdivisions of the room in which they had vainly sought their governess.

Until now separated by the partition, Rose and Blanche had not yet seen each other; but when at length their eyes met there ensued a heart-rending scene.



HE LISTENED WITH PASSIONATE ATTENTION.

CHAPTER LII

THE GUARDIAN ANGEL

TO the charming freshness of the sisters' faces had succeeded a livid pallor. Their large blue eyes, now hollow and sunk in, appeared of enormous dimensions. Their lips, once so rosy, were now suffused with a violet hue, and a similar color was gradually displacing the transparent carmine of their cheeks and fingers. It was as if all the roses in their charming countenances were fading and turning blue before the icy blast of death.

When the orphans met, tottering and hardly able to sustain themselves, a cry of mutual horror burst from their lips. Each of them exclaimed, at sight of the fearful change in her sister's features :

"Are you also ill, sister?"

And then, bursting into tears, they threw themselves into each other's arms and looked anxiously at each other.

"Good Heaven, Rose! how pale you are!"

"Like you, sister."

"And do you feel a cold shudder?"

"Yes, and my sight fails me."

"My bosom is all on fire."

"Sister, we are perhaps going to die."

"Let it only be together!"

"And our poor father?"

"And Dagobert?"

"Sister, our dream has come true!" cried Rose, almost deliriously, as she threw her arms round Blanche's neck. "Look! look! the angel Gabriel is here to fetch us."

Indeed, at this moment Gabriel entered the open space at the end of the room.

"Heavens! what do I see?" cried the young priest. "The daughters of Marshal Simon!"

And rushing forward, he received the sisters in his arms, for they were no longer able to stand. Already their drooping heads, their half-

closed eyes, their painful and difficult breathing, announced the approach of death.

Sister Martha was close at hand. She hastened to respond to the call of Gabriel. Aided by this pious woman, he was able to lift the orphans upon a bed reserved for the doctor in attendance. For fear that the sight of this mournful agony should make too deep an impression on the other patients, Sister Martha drew a large curtain, and the sisters were thus in some sort walled off from the rest of the room.

Their hands had been so tightly clasped together, during a nervous paroxysm, that it was impossible to separate them. It was in this position that the first remedies were applied — remedies incapable of conquering the violence of the disease, but which at least mitigated for a few moments the excessive pains they suffered, and restored some faint glimmer of perception to their obscured and troubled senses.

At this moment Gabriel was leaning over the bed with a look of inexpressible grief. With breaking heart, and face bathed in tears, he thought of the strange destiny which thus made him a witness of the death of these girls, his relations, whom but a few months before he had rescued from the horrors of the tempest. In spite of his firmness of soul, the missionary could not help shuddering as he reflected on the fate of the orphans, the death of Jacques Rennepont, and the fearful devices by which M. Hardy, retired to the cloistered solitude of St. Hérem, had become a member of the Society of Jesus almost in dying. The missionary said to himself that already four members of the Rennepont family — his family — had been successively struck down by some dreadful fate; and he asked himself with alarm how it was that the detestable interests of the Society of Loyola should be served by a providential fatality. The astonishment of the young missionary would have given place to the deepest horror could he have known the part that Rodin and his accomplices had taken, both in the death of Jacques Rennepont, by exciting, through Morok, the evil propensities of the artisan, and in the approaching end of Rose and Blanche, by converting through the Princess de Saint-Dizier the generous inspiration of the orphans into suicidal heroism.

Roused for a moment from the painful stupor into which they had been plunged, Rose and Blanche half opened their large eyes, already dull and faded. Then, more and more bewildered, they both gazed fixedly at the angelic countenance of Gabriel.

“Sister,” said Rose, in a faint voice, “do you see the archangel — as in our dreams, in Germany?”

“Yes — three days ago — he appeared to us.”

“He is come to fetch us.”

"Alas! will our death save our poor mother from purgatory?"

"Angel! blessed angel! pray God for our mother — and for us!"

Until now, stupefied with amazement and sorrow, almost suffocated with sobs, Gabriel had not been able to utter a word. But at these words of the orphans he exclaimed:

"Dear children, why doubt of your mother's salvation? Oh! never did a purer soul ascend to its Creator. Your mother! I know from my adopted father that her virtues and courage were the admiration of all who knew her. Oh! believe me; God has blessed her."

"Do you hear, sister?" cried Rose, as a ray of celestial joy illumined for an instant the livid faces of the orphans. "God has blessed our mother."

"Yes, yes," resumed Gabriel; "banish these gloomy ideas. Take courage, poor children. You must not die. Think of your father."

"Our father?" said Blanche, shuddering; and she continued, with a mixture of reason and wild excitement which would have touched the soul of the most indifferent: "Alas! he will not find us on his return. Forgive us, father, we did not think to do any harm. We wished, like you, to do something generous — to help our governess ——"

"And we did not think to die so quickly, and so soon. Yesterday we were gay and happy."

"Oh, good angel! you will appear to our father, even as you have appeared to us. You will tell him, that, in dying — the last thought of his children — was of him."

"We came here without Dagobert's knowing it. Do not let our father scold him."

"Blessed angel," resumed the other sister, in a still more feeble voice, "appear to Dagobert also. Tell him that we ask his forgiveness for the grief our death will occasion him."

"And let our old friend caress our poor *Spoilsport* for us — our faithful guardian," added Blanche, trying to smile.

"And then," resumed Rose, in a voice that was growing still fainter, "promise to appear to two other persons, that have been so kind to us — good Mother Bunch and the beautiful Mademoiselle Adrienne."

"We forget none whom we have loved," said Blanche, with a last effort. "Now, God grant we may go to our mother, never to leave her more."

"You promised it, good angel — you know you did — in the dream. You said to us: 'Poor children, come from so far, you will have traversed the earth — to rest on the maternal bosom!'"

"Oh, it is so dreadful — dreadful! So young, and no hope?" murmured Gabriel, as he buried his face in his hands. "Almighty Father!

Thy views are impenetrable. Alas! yet why should these children die this cruel death?"

Rose heaved a deep sigh, and said in an expiring tone:

"Let us be buried together,—united in life, in death not divided."

And the two turned their dying looks upon Gabriel and stretched out toward him their supplicating hands.

"Oh, blessed martyrs to a generous devotion!" cried the missionary, raising to heaven his eyes streaming with tears. "Angelic souls! treasures of innocence and truth! ascend to heaven—since God calls you to him, and the earth is not worthy to possess you!"

"Sister! father!" were the last words that the orphans pronounced with their dying voices.

And then the twins, by a last instinctive impulse, endeavored to clasp each other, and their eyes half opened to exchange yet another glance. They shuddered twice or thrice, their limbs stiffened, a deep sigh struggled from their violet-colored lips. Rose and Blanche were both dead.

Gabriel and Sister Martha, after closing the eyes of the orphans, knelt down to pray by the side of that funereal couch. Suddenly a great tumult was heard in the room. Rapid footsteps, mingled with imprecations, sounded close at hand, the curtain was drawn aside from this mournful scene, and Dagobert entered precipitately, pale, haggard, his dress in disorder. At sight of Gabriel and the Sister of Charity kneeling beside the corpses of his children, the soldier uttered a terrible roar, and tried to advance—but in vain—for, before Gabriel could reach him, Dagobert fell flat on the ground, and his gray head struck violently on the floor.

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It is night—a dark and stormy night.

One o'clock in the morning has just sounded from the church of Montmartre. It is to the cemetery of Montmartre that is carried the coffin which, according to the last wishes of Rose and Blanche, contains them both.

Through the thick shadow which rests upon that field of death may be seen moving a pale light. It is the grave-digger. He advances with caution; a dark-lantern is in his hand. A man wrapped in a cloak accompanies him. He holds down his head and weeps. It is Samuel.

The old Jew—the keeper of the house in the Rue Saint François.

On the night of the funeral of Jacques Rennepont, the first who died of the seven heirs, and who was buried in another cemetery, Samuel had a similar mysterious interview with the grave-digger to obtain a favor at the price of gold.

A strange and awful favor!

After passing down several paths bordered with cypress-trees, by the side of many tombs, the Jew and the grave-digger arrived at a little glade, situated near the western wall of the cemetery. The night was so dark that scarcely anything could be seen. After moving his lantern up and down and all about, the grave-digger showed Samuel, at the foot of a tall yew-tree with long black branches, a little mound of newly raised earth, and said:

"It is here."

"You are sure of it?"

"Yes, yes—two bodies in one coffin. It is not such a common thing."

"Alas! two in the same coffin!" said the Jew, with a deep sigh.

"Now that you know the place, what do you want more?" asked the grave-digger.

Samuel did not answer. He fell on his knees and piously kissed the little mound. Then rising, with his cheeks bathed in tears, he approached the grave-digger and spoke to him for some moments in a whisper—though they were alone and in the center of that deserted place. Then began between those two men a mysterious dialogue, which the night enveloped in shade and silence. The grave-digger, alarmed at what Samuel asked him, at first refused his request.

But the Jew, employing persuasions, entreaties, tears, and at last the seduction of the jingling gold, succeeded in conquering the scruples of the gravedigger. Though the latter trembled at the thought of what he promised, he said to Samuel in an agitated tone:

"To-morrow night then, at two o'clock."

"I shall be behind the wall," answered Samuel, pointing out the place with the aid of the lantern. "I will throw three stones into the cemetery for a signal."

"Yes, three stones—as a signal," replied the grave-digger, shuddering and wiping the cold sweat from his forehead.

With considerable remains of vigor, notwithstanding his great age, Samuel availed himself of the broken surface of the low wall, and climbing over it, soon disappeared.

The grave-digger returned home with hasty strides. From time to time he looked fearfully behind him, as though he had been pursued by some fatal vision.

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On the evening after the funeral of Rose and Blanche, Rodin wrote two letters.

The first, addressed to his mysterious correspondent at Rome, alluded to the deaths of Jacques Rennepont and Rose and Blanche

Simon, as well as to the cession of M. Hardy's property, and the donation of Gabriel—events which reduced the claimants of the inheritance to two—Mademoiselle de Cardoville and Djalma. This first note, written by Rodin for Rome, contained only the following words:

"Five from seven leaves two. Announce this result to the Cardinal-Prince. Let him go on. I advance—advance—advance!"

The second note, in a feigned hand, was addressed to Marshal Simon, to be delivered by a sure messenger, and contained these few lines:

"If there is yet time, make haste to return. Your daughters are both dead.

"You shall learn who killed them."

CHAPTER LIII

RUIN

IT is the day after the death of Marshal Simon's daughters. Mademoiselle de Cardoville is yet ignorant of the sad end of her young relatives. Her countenance is radiant with happiness, and never has she looked more beautiful; her eye has never been more brilliant, her complexion more dazzlingly white, her lip of a richer coral. According to her somewhat eccentric custom of dressing herself in her own house in a picturesque style, Adrienne wears to-day, though it is about three o'clock in the afternoon, a pale-green watered-silk dress, with a very full skirt, the sleeves and bodice slashed with rose-colored ribbon, and adorned with white bugle-beads of exquisite workmanship; while a slender network, also of white bugle-beads, concealing the thick plait of Adrienne's back-hair, forms an oriental head-dress of charming originality, and contrasts agreeably with the long curls which fall in front almost to the swell of the bosom. To the expression of indescribable happiness which marks the features of Mademoiselle de Cardoville is added a certain resolute, cutting, satirical air, which is not habitual to her. Her charming head and graceful, swan-like neck are raised in an attitude of defiance; her small, rose-colored nostrils seem to dilate with ill-repressed ardor, and she waits with haughty impatience for the moment of an aggressive and ironical interview.

Not far from Adrienne is Mother Bunch. She has resumed in the house the place which she at first occupied. The young seamstress is in mourning for her sister, but her countenance is expressive of a mild, calm sorrow. She looks at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with surprise; for never, till now, has she seen the features of the fair patrician impressed with such a character of ironical audacity.

Mademoiselle de Cardoville was exempt from the slightest coquetry, in the narrow and ordinary sense of the word. Yet she now cast an

inquiring look at the glass before which she was standing, and, having restored the elastic smoothness to one of her long, golden curls, by rolling it for a moment round her ivory finger, she carefully effaced with her hands some almost imperceptible folds which had formed themselves in the thick material of her elegant corsage. This movement, and that of turning her back to the glass, to see if her dress sat perfectly on all points, revealed, in serpentine undulations, all the charms and graces of her light and elegant figure; for, in spite of the rich fullness of her shoulders, white and firm as sculptured alabaster, Adrienne belonged to that class of privileged persons who are able at need to make a girdle out of a garter.

Having performed, with indescribable grace, these charming evolutions of feminine coquetry, Adrienne turned toward Mother Bunch, whose surprise was still on the increase, and said to her, smiling:

"My dear Magdalen, do not laugh at my question—but what would you say to a picture that should represent me as I am now?"

"Why, mademoiselle——"

"There you are again with your mademoiselle," said Adrienne, in a tone of gentle reproach.

"Well, then, Adrienne," resumed Mother Bunch, "I think it would be a charming picture, for you are dressed, as usual, with perfect taste."

"But am I not better dressed than on other days, my dear poetess? I began by telling you that I do not ask the question for my own sake," said Adrienne gayly.

"Well, I suppose so," replied Mother Bunch, with a faint smile. "It is certainly impossible to imagine anything that would suit you better. The light green and the pale rose-color, with the soft luster of the white ornaments, harmonize so well with your golden hair, that I cannot conceive, I tell you, a more graceful picture."

The speaker felt what she said, and she was happy to be able to express it, for we know the intense admiration of that poetic soul for all that was beautiful.

"Well," went on Adrienne gayly, "I am glad, my dear, that you find me better dressed than usual."

"Only——" said the hunchback, hesitating.

"Only?" repeated Adrienne, looking at her with an air of interrogation.

"Why, only," continued the other, "if I have never seen you look more pretty, I have also never observed in your features the resolute and ironical expression which they had just now. It was like an air of impatient defiance."

"And so it was, my dear little Magdalen," said Adrienne, throwing

her arms around the girl's neck with joyous tenderness. "I must kiss you for having guessed it. You see, I expect a visit from my dear aunt."



"The Princess de Saint-Dizier?" cried Mother Bunch, in alarm. "That wicked lady who did you so much evil?"

"The very same. She has asked for an interview, and I shall be delighted to receive her."

"Delighted?"

"Yes—a somewhat ironical and malicious delight, it is true," answered Adrienne still more gayly. "You shall judge for yourself. She regrets her gallantries, her beauty, her youth,—even her size afflicts the holy woman!—and she will see me young, fair, beloved—and above all thin—yes, thin," added Mademoiselle de Cardoville, laughing merrily. "And you may imagine, my dear, how much envy and despair the sight of a young, thin woman excites in a stout one of a certain age!"

"My friend," said Mother Bunch gravely, "you speak in jest. And yet, I know not why, the coming of this princess alarms me."

"Dear, gentle soul, be satisfied!" answered Adrienne affectionately. "I do not fear this woman—I no longer have any fear of her—and, to prove it to her confusion, I will treat her—a monster of hypocrisy and wickedness, who comes here no doubt on some abominable design—I will treat her as an inoffensive, ridiculous fat woman!"

And Adrienne again laughed.

A servant here entered the room, and interrupted the mirth of Adrienne by saying:

"The Princess de Saint-Dizier wishes to know if you can receive her?"

"Certainly," said Mademoiselle de Cardoville; and the servant retired.

Mother Bunch was about to rise and quit the room; but Adrienne held her back and said to her, taking her hand, with an air of serious tenderness:

"Stay, my dear friend, I entreat you."

"Do you wish it?"

"Yes; I wish—still in revenge, you know," said Adrienne, with a smile, "to prove to her highness of Saint-Dizier that I have an affectionate friend—that I have, in fact, every happiness."

"But, Adrienne," replied the other timidly, "consider——"

"Silence! here is the princess. Remain! I ask it as a favor. The instinct of your heart will discover any snare she may have laid. Did not your affection warn me of the plots of Rodin?"

Mother Bunch could not refuse such a request. She remained, but was about to draw back from the fireplace. Adrienne, however, took her by the hand and made her resume her seat in the arm-chair, saying:

"My dear Magdalen, keep your place. You owe nothing to the lady. With me it is different; she comes to my house."

Hardly had Adrienne uttered these words, than the princess entered, with head erect and haughty air (we have said she could carry herself most loftily), and advanced with a firm step.

The strongest minds have their side of puerile weakness; a savage

envy, excited by the elegance, wit, and beauty of Adrienne, bore a large part in the hatred of the princess for her niece; and though it was idle to think of eclipsing Adrienne, and the Princess de Saint-Dizier did not seriously mean to attempt it, she could not forbear, in preparing for the interview she had demanded, taking more pains even than usual in the arrangement of her dress. Beneath her robe of shot silk she was laced in and tightened to excess—a pressure which considerably increased the color in her cheeks. The throng of jealous and hateful sentiments which inspired her with regard to Adrienne, had so troubled the clearness of her ordinarily calm judgment, that instead of the plain and quiet style in which, as a woman of tact and taste, she was generally attired, she now committed the folly of wearing a dress of changing hues, and a crimson hat, adorned with a magnificent bird of paradise.

Hate, envy, the pride of triumph,—for she thought of the skillful perfidy with which she had sent to almost certain death the daughters of Marshal Simon,—and the execrable hope of succeeding in new plots were all expressed in the countenance of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, as she entered her niece's apartment.

Without advancing to meet her aunt, Adrienne rose politely from the sofa on which she was seated, made a half courtesy, full of grace and dignity, and immediately resumed her former posture. Then, pointing to an arm-chair near the fireplace, at one corner of which sat Mother Bunch, and she herself at the other, she said:

“Pray sit down, madame.”

The princess turned very red, remained standing, and cast a disdainful glance of insolent surprise at the seamstress, who, in compliance with Adrienne's wish, only bowed slightly at the entrance of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, without offering to give up her place. In acting thus, the young seamstress followed the dictates of her conscience, which told her that the real superiority did not belong to this base, hypocritical, and wicked princess, but rather to such a person as herself, the admirable and devoted friend.

“Let me beg you to sit down, madame,” resumed Adrienne in a mild tone, as she pointed to the vacant chair.

“The interview I have demanded, mademoiselle,” said the princess, “must be a private one.”

“I have no secrets, madame, for my best friend; you may speak in the presence of this young lady.”

“I have long known,” replied Madame de Saint-Dizier, with bitter irony, “that in all things you care little for secrecy, and that you are easy in the choice of what you call your friends. But you will permit me to act differently from you. If you have no secrets,

mademoiselle, I have,—and I do not choose to confide them to the first comer.”

So saying, the pious lady glanced contemptuously at the seamstress. The latter, hurt at the insolent tone of the princess, answered mildly and simply:

“I do not see what can be the humiliating difference between the first and the last comer to Mademoiselle de Cardoville’s.”

“What! can it speak!” cried the princess insolently.

“It can at least answer, madame,” replied Mother Bunch, in her calm voice.

“I wish to see you alone, mademoiselle—is that clear?” said the princess, impatiently, to her niece.

“I beg your pardon, but I do not quite understand you, madame,” said Adrienne, with an air of surprise. “This young lady, who honors me with her friendship, is willing to be present at this interview, which you have asked for.—I say she has consented to be present, for it needs, I confess, the kindest condescension in her to resign herself, from affection for me, to hear all the graceful, obliging, and charming things which you have no doubt come hither to communicate.”

“Mademoiselle ——” began the princess angrily.

“Permit me to interrupt you,” returned Adrienne, in a tone of perfect amenity, as if she were addressing the most flattering compliments to her visitor. “To put you quite at your ease with the lady here, I will begin by informing you that she is quite aware of all the holy perfidies, pious wrongs, and devout infamies of which you nearly made me the victim. She knows that you are a mother of the Church, such as one sees but few of in these days. May I hope, therefore, that you will dispense with this delicate and interesting reserve?”

“Really,” said the princess, with a sort of incensed amazement, “I scarcely know if I wake or sleep.”

“Dear me!” said Adrienne, in apparent alarm; “this doubt as to the state of your faculties is very shocking, madame. I see that the blood flies to your head, for your face sufficiently shows it; you seem oppressed, confined, uncomfortable. Perhaps (we women may say so between ourselves)—perhaps you are laced a little too tightly, madame?”

These words, pronounced by Adrienne with an air of warm interest and perfect simplicity, almost choked the princess with rage. She became crimson, seated herself abruptly, and exclaimed:

“Be it so, mademoiselle. I prefer this reception to any other. It puts me at my ease, as you say.”

“Does it indeed, madame?” said Adrienne, with a smile. “You may now at least speak frankly all that you feel, which must for you have

the charm of novelty. Confess that you are obliged to me for enabling you, even for a moment, to lay aside that mask of piety, amiability, and goodness, which must be so troublesome to you."

As she listened to the sarcasms of Adrienne (an innocent and excusable revenge, if we consider all the wrongs she had suffered), Mother Bunch felt her heart sink within her; for she dreaded, and justly, the malignity of the princess, who replied with the utmost calmness:

"A thousand thanks, mademoiselle, for your excellent intentions and sentiments. I appreciate them as I ought, and I hope in a short time to prove it to you."

"Well, madame," said Adrienne playfully, "let us have it all at once. I am full of impatient curiosity."

"And yet," said the princess, feigning in her turn a bitter and ironical delight, "you are far from having the least notion of what I am about to announce to you."

"Indeed! I fear that your candor and modesty deceive you," replied Adrienne, with the same mocking affability; "for there are very few things on your part that can surprise me, madame. You must be aware that from you, madame, I am prepared for anything."

"Perhaps, mademoiselle," said the princess, laying great stress on her words, "if, for instance, I were to tell you that within twenty-four hours — suppose between this and to-morrow — you will be reduced to poverty —"

This was so unexpected that Mademoiselle de Cardoville started in spite of herself, and Mother Bunch shuddered.

"Ah, mademoiselle!" said the princess, with triumphant joy and cruel mildness, as she watched the growing surprise of her niece, "confess that I have astonished you a little. You were right in giving our interview the turn it has taken. I should have needed all sorts of circumlocution to say to you, 'Niece, to-morrow you will be as poor as you are rich to-day.' But now I can tell you the fact quite plainly and simply."

Recovering from her first amazement, Adrienne replied, with a calm smile which checked the joy of the princess:

"Well, I confess frankly, madame, that you have surprised me; I expected from you one of those black pieces of malignity, one of those well-laid plots, in which you are known to excel, and I did not think you would make all this fuss about such a trifle."

"To be ruined — completely ruined," cried the princess, "and that by to-morrow — you, that have been so prodigal, will see your house, furniture, horses, jewels, even the ridiculous dresses of which you are so vain, all taken from you — do you call that a trifle? You, that spend with

indifference thousands of louis, will be reduced to a pension inferior to the wages you give your foot-boy — do you call that a trifle?”

To her aunt's cruel disappointment, Adrienne, who appeared quite to have recovered her serenity, was about to answer accordingly, when the door suddenly opened, and without being announced Prince Djalma entered the room.

A proud and tender expression of delight beamed from the radiant brow of Adrienne at sight of the prince, and it is impossible to describe the look of triumphant happiness and high disdain that she cast upon the Princess de Saint-Dizier.

Djalma himself had never looked more handsome, and never had more intense happiness been impressed on a human countenance. The Hindoo wore a long robe of white cashmere, adorned with innumerable stripes of gold and purple; his turban was of the same color and material; a magnificent figured shawl was twisted about his waist.

On seeing the Indian, whom she had not hoped to meet at Mademoiselle de Cardoville's, the Princess de Saint-Dizier could not at first conceal her extreme surprise.

It was between these four, then, that the following scene took place.

CHAPTER LIV

MEMORIES

DJALMA, having never before met the Princess de Saint-Dizier at Adrienne's, at first appeared rather astonished at her presence. The princess, keeping silence for a moment, contemplated with implacable hatred and envy those two beings, both so fair and young, so loving and happy. Suddenly she started, as if she had just remembered something of great importance, and for some seconds she remained absorbed in thought.

Adrienne and Djalma availed themselves of this interval to gaze fondly on each other, with a sort of ardent idolatry which filled their eyes with sweet tears. Then, at a movement of the Princess de Saint-Dizier, who seemed to rouse herself from her momentary trance, Mademoiselle de Cardoville said to the young prince, with a smile:

"My dear cousin, I have to repair an omission (voluntary, I confess, and for good reasons), in never having before mentioned to you one of my relations, whom I have now the honor to present to you. The Princess de Saint-Dizier!"

Djalma bowed; but Mademoiselle de Cardoville resumed, just as her aunt was about to make some reply:

"Madame de Saint-Dizier came very kindly to inform me of an event which is a most fortunate one for me, and of which I will speak to you hereafter, cousin — unless this amiable lady should wish to deprive me of the pleasure of making such a communication."

The unexpected arrival of the prince, and the recollections which had suddenly occurred to the princess, had no doubt greatly modified her first plans; for, instead of continuing the conversation with regard to Adrienne's threatened loss of fortune, the princess answered, with a bland smile that covered an odious meaning:

"I should be sorry, prince, to deprive my dear and amiable niece of the pleasure of announcing to you the happy news to which she alludes,

and which, as a near relative, I lost no time in communicating to her. I have here some notes on this subject," added the princess, delivering a paper to Adrienne, "which I hope will prove, to her entire satisfaction, the reality of what I have announced to her."

"A thousand thanks, my dear aunt," said Adrienne, receiving the paper with perfect indifference; "these precautions and proofs are quite superfluous. You know that I always believe you on your word, when it concerns your good feeling toward myself."

Notwithstanding his ignorance of the refined perfidy and cruel politeness of civilized life, Djalma, endowed with a tact and fineness of perception common to most natures of extreme susceptibility, felt some degree of mental discomfort as he listened to this exchange of false compliments. He could not guess their full meaning, but they sounded hollow to his ear; and, moreover, whether from instinct or presentiment, he had conceived a vague dislike for the Princess de Saint-Dizier. That pious lady, full of the great affair in hand, was a prey to the most violent agitation, which betrayed itself in the growing color of her cheeks, her bitter smile, and the malicious brightness of her glance. As he gazed on this woman, Djalma was unable to conquer his rising antipathy, and he remained silent and attentive, while his handsome countenance lost something of its former serenity.

Mother Bunch also felt the influence of a painful impression. She glanced in terror at the princess, and then imploringly at Adrienne, as though she entreated the latter to put an end to an interview of which the young seamstress foresaw the fatal consequences. But unfortunately, the Princess de Saint-Dizier was too much interested in prolonging this conversation; and Mademoiselle de Cardoville, gathering new courage and confidence from the presence of the man she adored, took delight in vexing the princess with the exhibition of their happy loves.

After a short silence, the Princess de Saint-Dizier observed in a soft and insinuating tone:

"Really, prince, you cannot think how pleased I was to learn by public report (for people talk of nothing else, and with good reason) of your chivalrous attachment to my dear niece; for, without knowing it, you will extricate me from a difficult position."

Djalma made no answer, but he looked at Mademoiselle de Cardoville with a surprised and almost sorrowful air, as if to ask what her aunt meant to insinuate.

The latter, not perceiving this mute interrogation, resumed as follows:

"I will express myself more clearly, prince. You can understand

that, being the nearest relative of this dear, obstinate girl, I am more or less responsible for her conduct in the eyes of the world; and you, prince, seem just to have arrived on purpose, from the end of the earth,



to take charge of a destiny which had caused me considerable apprehension. It is charming, it is excellent; and I know not which most to admire, your courage or your good fortune."

The princess threw a glance of diabolical malice at Adrienne, and awaited her answer with an air of defiance.

"Listen to our good aunt, my dear cousin," said the young lady, smiling calmly. "Since our affectionate kinswoman sees you and me united and happy, her heart is swelling with such a flood of joy that it must run over, and the effects will be delightful. Only have a little patience, and you will behold them in their full beauty. I do not know," added Adrienne, in the most natural tone, "why, in thinking of these outpourings of our dear aunt's affection, I should remember what you told me, cousin, of a certain viper in your country, which sometimes, in a powerless bite, breaks its fangs, and, absorbing its own venom, becomes the victim of the poison it distills. Come, my dear aunt, you that have so good and noble a heart, I am sure you must feel interested in the fate of those poor vipers."

The princess darted an implacable look at her niece, and replied, in an agitated voice:

"I do not see the object of this selection of natural history. Do you, prince?"

Djalma made no answer; leaning with his arm on the mantel-piece, he threw dark and piercing glances upon the princess. His involuntary hatred of this woman filled his heart.

"Ah, my dear aunt!" resumed Adrienne, in a tone of self-reproach; "have I presumed too much on the goodness of your heart? Have you not even sympathy for vipers? For whom, then, have you any? After all, I can very well understand it," added Adrienne, as if to herself; "vipers are so thin. But, to lay aside these follies," she continued gayly, as she saw the ill-repressed rage of the pious woman, "tell us at once, my dear aunt, all the tender things which the sight of our happiness inspires."

"I hope to do so, my amiable niece. First, I must congratulate this dear prince on having come so far to take charge, in all confidence, and with his eyes shut, of you, my poor child, whom we were obliged to confine as mad, in order to give a decent color to your excesses. You remember the handsome lad that we found in your apartment. You cannot be so faithless as already to have forgotten his name? He was a fine youth, and a poet — one Agricola Baudoin — and was discovered in a secret place attached to your bed-chamber. All Paris was amused with the scandal — for you are not about to marry an unknown person, dear prince; her name has been in every mouth."

At these unexpected and dreadful words, Adrienne, Djalma, and Mother Bunch, though under the influence of different kinds of resentment, remained for a moment mute with surprise; and the princess,

judging it no longer necessary to repress her infernal joy and triumphant hatred, exclaimed, as she rose from her seat, with flushed cheek and flashing eyes :

“Yes, I defy you to contradict me. Were we not forced to confine you, on the plea of madness ? And did we not find a workman (your lover) concealed in your bedroom ?”

On this horrible accusation, Djalma's golden complexion, transparent as amber, became suddenly the color of lead ; his eyes, fixed and staring, showed the white round the pupil — his upper lip, red as blood, was curled in a kind of wild convulsion, which exposed to view the firmly set teeth — and his whole countenance became so frightfully threatening and ferocious that Mother Bunch shuddered with terror.

Carried away by the ardor of his blood, the young Oriental felt a sort of dizzy, unreflecting, involuntary rage — a fiery commotion, like that which makes the blood leap to the brave man's eyes and brain, when he feels a blow upon his face. If, during that moment, rapid as the passage of the lightning through the cloud, action could have taken the place of thought, the princess and Adrienne, Mother Bunch and himself, would all have been annihilated by an explosion as sudden and fatal as that of the bursting of a mine.

He would have killed the princess, because she accused Adrienne of infamous deception ; he would have killed Adrienne, because she could even be suspected of such infamy ; and Mother Bunch, for being a witness of the accusation ; and himself, in order not to survive such horrid treachery. But, oh, wonder ! his furious and bloodshot gaze met the calm look of Adrienne — a look so full of dignity and serene confidence — and the expression of ferocious rage passed away like a flash of lightning.

Much more : to the great surprise of the princess and the young workgirl, as the glances which Djalma cast upon Adrienne went, as it were, deeper into that pure soul, not only did the Indian grow calm, but, by a kind of transfiguration, his countenance seemed to borrow her serene expression, and reflect, as in a mirror, the noble serenity impressed on the young lady's features.

Let us explain physically this moral revolution, as consoling to the terrified workgirl as provoking to the princess.

Hardly had the princess distilled the atrocious calumny from her venomous lips than Djalma, then standing before the fireplace, had, in the first paroxysm of his fury, advanced a step toward her ; but wishing, as it were, to moderate his rage, he held by the marble chimney-piece, which he grasped with iron strength. A convulsive trembling

shook his whole body, and his features, altered and contracted, became almost frightful.

Adrienne, on her part, when she heard the accusation, yielding to a first impulse of just indignation, even as Djalma had yielded to one of blind fury, rose abruptly, with offended pride flashing from her eyes; but, almost immediately appeased by the consciousness of her own purity, her charming face resumed its expression of adorable serenity.

It was then that her eyes met Djalma's. For a second the young lady was even more afflicted than terrified at the threatening and formidable expression of the young Indian's countenance.

"Can stupid indignity exasperate him to this degree?" said Adrienne to herself. "Does he suspect *me*, then?"

But to this reflection, as rapid as it was painful, succeeded the most lively joy, when the eyes of Adrienne rested for a short time on those of the Indian, and she saw his agitated countenance grow calm as if by magic and become radiant and beautiful as before. Thus was the abominable plot of the Princess de Saint-Dizier utterly confounded by the sincere and confiding expression of Adrienne's face.

This was not all. At the moment when, as a spectator of this mute and expressive scene (which proved so well the wondrous sympathy of those two beings, who, without speaking a word, had understood and satisfied each other), the princess was choking with rage and vexation, Adrienne, with a charming smile and gesture, extended her fair hand to Djalma, who, kneeling, imprinted on it a kiss of fire, which sent a light blush to the forehead of the young lady.

Then the Hindoo, placing himself on the ermine carpet at the feet of Mademoiselle de Cardoville in an attitude full of grace and respect, rested his chin on the palm of one of his hands and gazed on her silently in a sort of mute adoration, while Adrienne, bending over him with a happy smile, "looked at the babies in his eyes," as the song says, with as much amorous complacency as if the hateful princess had not been present.

But soon, as if something were wanting to complete her happiness, Adrienne beckoned to Mother Bunch and made her sit down by her side. Then, with her hand clasped in that of this excellent friend, Mademoiselle de Cardoville smiled on Djalma, stretched adoringly at her feet, and cast on the dismayed princess a look of such calm and firm serenity, so nobly expressive of the invincible quiet of her happiness and her lofty disdain of all calumnious attacks, that the Princess de Saint-Dizier, confused and stupefied, murmured some hardly intelligible words in a voice trembling with passion, and completely losing her presence of mind, rushed toward the door.

But at this moment the hunchback, who feared some ambush, some perfidious plot in the background, resolved, after exchanging a glance with Adrienne, to accompany the princess to her carriage.

The angry disappointment of the Princess de Saint-Dizier when she saw herself thus followed and watched, appeared so comical to Mademoiselle de Cardoville that she could not help laughing aloud; and it was to the sound of contemptuous hilarity that the hypocritical princess, with rage and despair in her heart, quitted the house to which she had hoped to bring trouble and misery.

Adrienne and Djalma were left alone.

Before relating the scene which took place between them, a few retrospective words are indispensable.

It will easily be imagined that since Mademoiselle de Cardoville and the Oriental had been brought into such close contact after so many disappointments, their days had passed away like a dream of happiness. Adrienne had especially taken pains to bring to light, one by one, all the generous qualities of Djalma, of which she had read so much in her books of travel. The young lady had imposed on herself this tender and patient study of Djalma's character, not only to justify to her own mind the intensity of her love, but because this period of trial, to which she had assigned a term, enabled her to temper and divert the violence of Djalma's passion — a task the more meritorious, as she herself was of the same ardent temperament. For, in those two lovers, the finest qualities of sense and soul seemed exactly to balance each other, and Heaven had bestowed on them the rarest beauty of form and the most adorable excellence of heart, as if to legitimatize the irresistible attraction which drew and bound them together.

What, then, was to be the term of this painful trial which Adrienne had imposed on Djalma and on herself? This is what Mademoiselle de Cardoville intended to tell the prince, in the interview she had with him, after the abrupt departure of the Princess de Saint-Dizier.

CHAPTER LV

THE ORDEAL



ADRIENNE DE CARDOVILLE and Djalma had remained alone.

Such was the noble confidence which had succeeded in the Hindoo's mind to his first movement of unreflecting fury, caused by the infamous calumny, that, once alone with Adrienne, he did not even allude to that shameful accusation.

On her side (touching and admirable sympathy of those two hearts!), the young lady was too proud, conscious of the purity of her love, to descend to any justification of herself. She would have considered it an insult both to herself and him. Therefore the lovers began their interview as if the princess had never made any such remark. The same contempt was extended to the papers which the princess had brought with her to prove the imminent ruin to which Adrienne was exposed. The young lady had laid them down, without reading them, on a stand within her reach. She made a graceful sign to Djalma to seat himself by her side, and accordingly he quitted, not without regret, the place he had occupied at her feet.

"My love," said Adrienne, in a grave and tender voice, "you have often impatiently asked me when would come the term of the trial we have laid upon ourselves. That moment is at hand."

Djalma started, and could not restrain a cry of surprise and joy; but this almost trembling exclamation was so soft and sweet that it seemed rather the expression of ineffable gratitude than of exulting passion.

Adrienne continued:

"Separated—surrounded by treachery and fraud—mutually deceived as to each other's sentiments—we yet loved on, and in that followed an irresistible attraction, stronger than every opposing influence. But since then, in these days of happy retirement from the world, we have learned to value and esteem each other more. Left to ourselves in per-

feet freedom, we have had the courage to resist every temptation, that hereafter we might be happy without remorse. During these days in which our hearts have been laid open to each other, we have read them thoroughly. Yes, Djalma! I believe in you, and you in me—I find in you all that you find in me—every possible human security for our future happiness. But this love must yet be consecrated; and in the eyes of the world in which we are called upon to live, marriage is the only consecration, and marriage enchains one's whole life."

Djalma looked at the young lady with surprise.

"Yes, one's whole life! And yet who can answer for the sentiments of a whole life?" resumed Adrienne. "A God, that could see into the future, could alone bind irrevocably certain hearts for their own happiness; but, alas! to human eyes the future is impenetrable. Therefore, to accept indissoluble ties, for any longer than one can answer for a present sentiment, is to commit an act of selfish and impious folly."

"A sad thought," said Djalma after a moment's reflection, "but a true one." He continued to look at her with increasing astonishment.

Adrienne hastened to add, in a tender and thrilling tone: "Do not misunderstand me, my dear friend. The love of two beings like ourselves, who, after a thousand patient experiences of the heart, the soul, the mind, have found in each other every assurance of happiness, is too noble, great, and divine a thing not to be consecrated by religion. I have not, like my venerable aunt, the faith of the Mass; but I have faith in God; I know that from him came our burning love, and that he is glorified by it. It is, then, with grateful invocations that we ought to pledge ourselves, *not* to love each other always, *not* always to belong to each other——"

"What do you say?" cried Djalma.

"No," resumed Adrienne; "for no one can take such a pledge without falsehood or folly. But we *may* promise, in the sincerity of our souls, to do all that is humanly possible to make our love last forever. We ought not to accept indissoluble bonds, for, if we continue to love, of what use are they? And, were our love to cease, why should we wear chains that would then be a horrible tyranny? Let me ask you that question?"

Djalma made no reply, but, with an almost respectful gesture, he urged the young girl to continue.

"And then," proceeded she, with a mixture of tenderness and pride, "from respect for your dignity and mine, I would never promise to keep a law made by man against woman with contemptuous and brutal egotism—a law which denies to woman soul, mind, and heart—a law which none can accept, without being either a slave or perjured—a law

which takes from the girl her name, reduces the wife to a state of degrading inferiority, denies to the mother all rights over her own children, and enslaves one human creature to the will of another, who is in all respects her equal in the sight of God! You know, my love," added the young lady, with passionate enthusiasm, "how much I honor you, whose father was called the Father of the Generous. I do not then fear, noble and valiant heart, to see you use against me these tyrannical powers; but, throughout my life, I never uttered a falsehood, and our love is too sacred and celestial to be purchased by a double perjury. No, never will I swear to observe a law that my dignity and my reason refuse to sanction. If, to-morrow, the freedom of divorce were established, and the rights of woman recognized, I should be willing to observe usages which would then be in accordance with my conscience and with what is just, possible, and humane." Then, after a pause, Adrienne continued, with such deep and sweet emotion that a tear of tenderness veiled her beauteous eyes: "Oh! if you knew, my love, what your love is to me; if you knew how dear and sacred I hold your happiness—you would excuse, you would understand, these generous superstitions of a loving and honest heart, which could only see a fatal omen in forms degraded by falsehood and perjury. What I wish is to attach you by love, to bind you in chains of happiness—and to leave you free, that I may owe your constancy only to your affection."

Djalma had listened to the young girl with passionate attention. Proud and generous himself, he admired this proud and generous character. After a moment's meditative silence, he answered, in his sweet, sonorous voice, in an almost solemn tone:

"Like you, I hold in detestation falsehood and perjury. Like you, I think that man degrades himself by accepting the right of being a cowardly tyrant, even though resolved never to use the power. Like you, I could not bear the thought that I owed all I most valued, not to your love alone, but to the eternal constraint of an indissoluble bond. Like you, I believe there is no dignity but in freedom. But you have said that, for this great and holy love, you demand a religious consecration; and if you reject vows that you cannot make without folly and perjury, are there then others which your reason and your heart approve? Who will pronounce the required blessing? To whom must these vows be spoken?"

"In a few days, my love, I believe I shall be able to tell you all. Every evening, after your departure, I have no other thought. I wish to find the means of uniting yourself and me—in the eyes of God, not of the law—within the only limits that reason can approve without offending the habits and prejudices of a world in which it may suit us hereafter to live. Yes, my friend, when you know whose are the noble

hands that are to join ours together—who is to bless and glorify God in our union—a sacred union, that will leave us worthy and free—you will say, I am sure, that never purer hands could have been laid upon us. Forgive me, friend! all this is in earnest—yes, earnest as our



love, earnest as our happiness. If my words seem to you strange, my thoughts unreasonable, tell it me, love! We will seek and find some better means to reconcile that we owe to Heaven with what we owe to the world and to ourselves. It is said that lovers are beside them-

selves," added the young lady, with a smile, "but I think that no creatures are more reasonable."

"When I hear you speak thus of our happiness," said Djalma, deeply moved, "with so much calm and earnest tenderness, I think I see a mother occupied with the future prospects of her darling child — trying to surround him with all that can make him strong, valiant, and generous — trying to remove far from him all that is ignoble and unworthy. You ask me to tell you if your thoughts seem strange to me, Adrienne. You forget that what makes my faith in our love is my feeling exactly as you do. What offends you offends me also; what disgusts you disgusts me. Just now when you cited to me the laws of this country, which respect in a woman not even a mother's right, I thought with pride of our barbarous countries, where woman, though a slave, is made free when she becomes a mother. No, no; such laws are not made either for you or me. Is it not to prove your sacred respect for our love to wish to raise it above the shameful servitude that would degrade it? You see, Adrienne, I have often heard say, by the priests of my country, that there were beings inferior to the gods but superior to every other creature. I did not believe those priests; but now I do."

These last words were uttered, not in the tone of flattery, but with an accent of sincere conviction, and with that sort of passionate veneration and almost timid fervor which mark the believer talking of his faith; but what is impossible to describe is the ineffable harmony of these almost religious words, with the mild, deep tone of the young Oriental's voice — as well as the ardent expression of amorous melancholy, which gave an irresistible charm to his enchanting features.

Adrienne had listened to Djalma with an indescribable mixture of joy, gratitude, and pride. Laying her hand on her bosom, as if to keep down its violent pulsations, she resumed, as she looked at the prince with delight:

"Behold him, ever the same,— just, good, great! Oh, my heart! my heart! how proudly it beats. Blessed be God, who created me for this adored lover. He must mean to astonish the world, by the prodigies of tenderness and charity that such a love may produce. They do not yet know the sovereign might of free, happy, ardent love. Yes, Djalma! on the day when our hands are joined together, what hymns of gratitude will ascend to heaven. Ah! they do not know the immense, the insatiable longing for joy and delight, which possesses two hearts like ours; they do not know what rays of happiness stream from the celestial halo of such a flame. Oh, yes! I feel it. Many tears will be dried, many cold hearts warmed at the divine fire of our love. And it will be by the benedictions of those we serve that they will learn the intoxication of our rapture."

To the dazzled eyes of Djalma, Adrienne appeared more and more an ideal being — partaking of the divinity by her goodness, of the creature by passion; for, yielding to the intensity of excitement, Adrienne fixed upon Djalma looks that sparkled with love.

Then, almost beside himself, the Asiatic fell prostrate at the feet of the maiden, and exclaimed in a supplicating voice:

“Mercy! my courage fails me. Have pity on me! do not talk thus. Oh, that day! what years of my life would I not give to hasten it!”

“Silence! no blasphemy. Do not your years belong to me?”

“Adrienne! you love me!”

The young lady did not answer; but her half-veiled, burning glance dealt the last blow to Djalma’s reason.

Seizing her hands in his own, he exclaimed with a tremulous voice:

“That day, in which we shall mount to heaven, in which we shall be gods in happiness — why postpone it any longer?”

“Because our love must be consecrated by the benediction of Heaven.”

“Are we not free?”

“Yes, yes, my love; we are free. Let us be worthy of our liberty!”

“Adrienne! mercy!”

“I ask you also to have mercy — to have mercy on the sacredness of our love. Do not profane it in its very flower. Believe my heart! believe my presentiments! to profane it would be to kill. Courage, my adored lover! a few days longer — and then happiness — without regret and without remorse!”

“And, until then, hell! tortures without a name! You do not, cannot know what I suffer when I leave your presence. Your image follows me, your breath burns me up; I cannot sleep, but call on you every night with sighs and tears — just as I called on you when I thought you did not love me; and yet I know you love me, I know you are mine. But to see you every day more beautiful, more adored — and every day to quit you more impassioned — oh! you cannot tell — ”

Djalma was unable to proceed.

What he said of his devouring tortures, Adrienne had felt, perhaps even more intensely. Electrified by the passionate words of Djalma, so beautiful in his excitement, her courage failed her, and she perceived that an irresistible languor was creeping over her. By a last chaste effort of the will, she rose abruptly, and hastening to the door which communicated with Mother Bunch’s chamber, she exclaimed:

“My sister, help me!”

In another moment Mademoiselle de Cardoville, her face bathed in tears, clasped the young seamstress in her arms; while Djalma knelt respectfully on the threshold he did not dare to pass.

CHAPTER LVI

AMBITION



FEW days after the interview of Djalma and Adrienne just described, Rodin was alone in his bed-chamber, in the house in the Rue de Vaugirard, walking up and down the room where he had so valiantly undergone the moxas of Dr. Baleinier.

With his hands thrust into the hind-pockets of his great-coat and his head bowed upon his breast, the Jesuit seemed to be reflecting profoundly, and his varying walk, now slow, now quick, betrayed the agitation of his mind.

"On the side of Rome," said Rodin to himself, "I am tranquil. All is going well. The abdication is as good as settled, and if I can pay them the price agreed, the Prince Cardinal can secure me a majority of nine voices in the conclave. Our GENERAL is with me; the doubts of Cardinal Malipieri are at an end or have found no echo. Yet I am not quite easy with regard to the reported correspondence between Father d'Aigrigny and Malipieri. I have not been able to intercept any of it. No matter, the old trooper is a man *pledged*; that soldier's business is settled. A little patience and he will be *executed*."

Here the pale lips were contracted by one of those frightful smiles which gave to Rodin's countenance so diabolical an expression.

After a pause he resumed:

"The funeral of the free-thinker, the philanthropist, the workman's friend, took place yesterday at St. H rem. Fran ois Hardy went off in a fit of ecstatic delirium. I had his donation, it is true; but this is more certain. Everything may be disputed in this world; the dead dispute nothing."

Rodin remained in thought for some moments; then he added in a grave tone:

"There remain this red-haired wench and her mulatto. This is the 27th of May; the 1st of June approaches, and these turtle-doves still

seem invulnerable. The princess thought she had hit upon a good plan, and I should have thought so too. It was a good idea to mention the discovery of Agricola Baudoin in the madcap's room, for it made the Indian tiger roar with savage jealousy. Yes; but then the dove began to coo, and hold out her pretty beak, and the foolish tiger sheathed his claws and rolled on the ground before her. It's a pity, for there was some sense in the scheme."

The walk of Rodin became more and more agitated.

"Nothing is more extraordinary," continued he, "than the generative succession of ideas. In comparing this red-haired jade to a dove I could not help thinking of that infamous old woman, Sainte-Colombe, whom that big rascal Jacques Dumoulin pays his court to, and whom the Abbé Corbinet will finish, I hope, by turning to good account. I have often remarked that, as a poet may find an excellent rhyme by mere chance, so the germ of the best ideas is sometimes found in a word, or in some absurd resemblance like the present. That abominable hag Sainte-Colombe and the pretty Adrienne de Cardoville go as well together as a ring would suit a cat or a necklace a fish. Well, there is nothing in it."

Hardly had Rodin pronounced these words, than he started suddenly, and his face shone with a fatal joy. Then it assumed an expression of meditative astonishment, as happens when chance reveals some unexpected discovery to the surprised and charmed inquirer after knowledge.

Soon with raised head and sparkling eye, his hollow cheeks swelling with joy and pride, Rodin folded his arms in triumph on his breast and exclaimed:

"Oh! how admirable and marvelous are these mysterious evolutions of the mind; how incomprehensible is the chain of human thought, which, starting from an absurd jingle of words, arrives at a splendid or luminous idea! Is it weakness; or is it strength? Strange — very strange! I compare the red-haired girl to a dove — a colombe. That makes me think of the hag who traded in the bodies and souls of so many creatures. Vulgar proverbs occur to me about a ring and a cat, a fish and a necklace — and suddenly, at the word NECKLACE, a new light dawns upon me. Yes; that one word NECKLACE shall be to me a golden key to open the portals of my brain, so long foolishly closed."

And after again walking hastily up and down Rodin continued:

"Yes; it is worth attempting. The more I reflect upon it the more feasible it appears. Only, how to get at that wretch Sainte-Colombe? Well, there is Jacques Dumoulin, and the other — where to find her? That is the stumbling-block. I must not shout before I am out of the wood."

Rodin began again to walk, biting his nails with an air of deep thought. For some moments, such was the tension of his mind, large drops of sweat stood on his yellow brow. He walked up and down, stopped, stamped with his foot, now raised his eyes as if in search of an inspiration, and now scratched his head violently with his left hand, while he continued to gnaw the nails of the right. Finally, from time to time, he uttered exclamations of rage, despondency, or hope, as by turns they took possession of his mind. If the cause of this monster's agitation had not been horrible, it would have been a curious and interesting spectacle to watch the labors of that powerful brain—to follow, as it were, on that shifting countenance the progress and development of the project on which he was now concentrating all the resources of his strong intellect.

At length the work appeared to be near completion, for Rodin resumed:

"Yes, yes! it is bold, hazardous—but then it is prompt, and the consequences may be incalculable. Who can foresee the effects of the explosion of a mine?"

Then yielding to a movement of enthusiasm, which was hardly natural to him, the Jesuit exclaimed with rapture:

"Oh, the passions! the passions! what a magical instrument do they form if you do but touch the keys with a light, skillful, and vigorous hand! How beautiful too is the power of thought! Talk of the acorn that becomes an oak, the seed that grows up to the corn—the seed takes months, the acorn centuries, to unfold its splendors; but here is a little word in eight letters, necklace, and this word, falling into my brain but a few minutes ago, has grown and grown till it has become larger than any oak. Yes, that word is the germ of an idea, that, like the oak, lifts itself up toward heaven for the greater glory of the Lord—such as they call him, and such as I would assert him to be should I attain—and I shall attain—for these miserable Renneponts will pass away like a shadow. And what matters it, after all, to the moral order I am reserved to guide, whether these people live or die? What do such lives weigh in the balance of the great destinies of the world?—while this inheritance, which I shall boldly fling into the scale, will lift me to a sphere from which one commands many kings, many nations—let them say and make what noise they will. The idiots—the stupid idiots! or rather, the kind, blessed, adorable idiots! They think they have crushed us when they say to us men of the Church: 'You take the *spiritual*, but we will keep the *temporal*!' Oh, their conscience or their modesty inspires them well when it bids them not meddle with *spiritual* things! They abandon the *spiritual*! they despise it, they will

have nothing to do with it — oh, the venerable asses! They do not see that, even as they go straight to the mill, it is by the *spiritual* that we go straight to the *temporal*. As if the mind did not govern the body! They leave us the *spiritual* — that is, command of the conscience, soul, heart, and judgment; the *spiritual* — that is, the distribution of Heaven's rewards, and punishments, and pardons — without check, without control, in the secrecy of the confessional — and that dolt, the *temporal*, has nothing but brute matter for his portion, and yet rubs his paunch for joy. Only from time to time he perceives, too late, that if he has the body we have the soul, and that the soul governs the body, and so the body ends by coming with us also, to the great surprise of Master *Temporal*, who stands staring with his hands on his paunch, and says: 'Dear me! is it possible?'"

Then, with a laugh of savage contempt, Rodin began to walk with great strides, and thus continued:

"Oh! let me reach it — let me but reach the place of Sixtus V. — and the world shall see (one day when it awakes) what it is to have the spiritual power in hands like mine — in the hands of a priest who, for fifty years, has lived hardly, frugally, chastely, and who, were he pope, would continue to live hardly, frugally, chastely!"

Rodin became terrible as he spoke thus.

All the sanguinary, sacrilegious, execrable ambition of the worst popes seemed written in fiery characters on the brow of this son of Ignatius. A morbid desire of rule seemed to stir up the Jesuit's impure blood; he was bathed in a burning sweat, and a kind of nauseous vapor spread itself round about him.

Suddenly the noise of a traveling-carriage, which entered the courtyard of the house, attracted his attention. Regretting his momentary excitement, he drew from his pocket his dirty white and red cotton handkerchief, and dipping it in a glass of water, he applied it to his cheeks and temples, while he approached the window to look through the half-open blinds at the traveler who had just arrived. The projection of a portico over the door at which the carriage had stopped intercepted Rodin's view.

"No matter," said he, recovering his coolness; "I shall know presently who is there. I must write at once to Jacques Dumoulin, to come hither immediately. He served me well with regard to that little slut in the Rue Clovis, who made my hair stand on end with her infernal Béranger. This time Dumoulin may serve me again. I have him in my clutches, and he will obey me.

Rodin sat down to his desk, and wrote.

A few seconds later some one knocked at the door, which was

double-locked, quite contrary to the rules of the Order. But, sure of his influence and importance, Rodin, who had obtained from the General permission to be rid for a time of the inconvenient company of a *socius*, often took upon himself to break through a number of the rules.

A servant entered, and delivered a letter to Rodin. Before opening it the latter said to the man:

"What carriage is that which just arrived?"

"It comes from Rome, father," answered the servant, bowing.

"From Rome!" said Rodin hastily; and, in spite of himself, a vague uneasiness was expressed in his countenance. But, still holding the letter in his hands, he added:

"Who comes in the carriage?"

"A reverend father of our blessed Company."

Notwithstanding his ardent curiosity, for he knew that a reverend father, traveling post, is always charged with some important mission, Rodin asked no more questions on the subject, but said, as he pointed to the paper in his hand:

"Whence comes this letter?"

"From our house at St. Hérem, father."

Rodin looked more attentively at the writing, and recognized the hand of Father d'Aigrigny, who had been commissioned to attend M. Hardy in his last moments. The letter read as follows:

"I send a dispatch to inform your reverence of a fact which is perhaps more singular than important. After the funeral of M. François Hardy, the coffin which contained his remains had been provisionally deposited in a vault beneath our chapel, until it could be removed to the cemetery of the neighboring town. This morning, when our people went down into the vault to make the necessary preparations for the removal of the body — the coffin had disappeared."

"That is strange, indeed," said Rodin, with a start.

Then he continued to read:

"All search has hitherto been vain to discover the authors of the sacrilegious deed. The chapel being, as you know, at a distance from the house, they were able to effect an entry without disturbing us. We have found traces of a four-wheeled carriage on the damp ground in the neighborhood; but, at some little distance from the chapel, these marks are lost in the sand, and it has been impossible to follow them any farther."

"Who can have carried away this body?" said Rodin, with a thoughtful air. "Who could have any interest in doing so?"

He continued to read:

"Luckily the certificate of death is quite correct. I sent for a doctor

from Etampes, to prove the disease, and no question can be raised on that point. The donation is therefore good and valid in every respect, but I think it best to inform your reverence of what has happened, that you may take measures accordingly," etc., etc.



After a moment's reflection, Rodin said to himself:

"D'Aigrigny is right in his remark; it is more singular than important. Still, it makes one think. We must have an eye to this affair."

Turning toward the servant who had brought him the letter, Rodin gave him the note he had just written to Nini Moulin, and said to him :

“ Let this letter be taken instantly to its address, and let the bearer wait for an answer.”

“ Yes, father.”

At the moment the servant left the room, a reverend father entered and said to Rodin :

“ Father Caboccini of Rome has just arrived, with a mission from our General to your reverence.”

At these words Rodin's blood ran cold, but he maintained his immovable calmness, and said simply :

“ Where is Father Caboccini ? ”

“ In the next room, father.”

“ Beg him to walk in, and leave us,” said the other.

A second after Father Caboccini of Rome entered the room, and was left alone with Rodin.

CHAPTER LVII

TO A SOCIUS, A SOCIUS AND A HALF

THE Reverend Father Cabocchini, the Roman Jesuit who now came to visit Rodin, was a short man of about thirty years of age, plump, in good condition, and with an abdomen that swelled out his black cassock.

The good little father was blind with one eye, but his remaining organ of vision sparkled with vivacity. His rosy countenance was gay, smiling, joyous, splendidly crowned with thick chestnut hair, which curled like a wax doll's. His address was cordial to familiarity, and his expansive and petulant manners harmonized well with his general appearance.

In a second Rodin had taken his measure of the Italian emissary; and as he knew the practice of his Company and the ways of Rome, he felt by no means comfortable at sight of this jolly little father with such affable manners. He would have less feared some tall, bony priest, with austere and sepulchral countenance, for he knew that the Company loves to deceive by the outward appearance of its agents; and, if Rodin guessed rightly, the cordial address of this personage would rather tend to show that he was charged with some fatal mission.

Suspicious, attentive, with eye and mind on the watch, like an old wolf expecting an attack, Rodin advanced, as usual, slowly and tortuously toward the little man, so as to have time to examine him thoroughly and penetrate beneath his jovial outside. But the Roman left him no space for that purpose. In his impetuous affection, he threw himself right on the neck of Rodin, pressed him in his arms with an effusion of tenderness, and kissed him over and over again upon both cheeks, so loudly and plentifully that the echo resounded through the apartment.

In his life Rodin had never been so treated. More and more uneasy at the treachery which must needs lurk under such warm embraces, and irritated by his own evil presentiments, the French Jesuit did all he could to extricate himself from the Roman's exaggerated tokens of ten-

derness. But the latter kept his hold; his arms, though short, were vigorous, and Rodin was kissed over and over again, till the little one-eyed man was quite out of breath.

It is hardly necessary to state that these embraces were accompanied by the most friendly, affectionate, and fraternal exclamations—all in tolerably good French, but with a strong Italian accent, which we must beg the reader to supply for himself after we have given a single specimen.

It will perhaps be remembered that, fully aware of the danger he might possibly incur by his ambitious machinations, and knowing from history that the use of poison had often been considered at Rome as a state necessity, Rodin, on being suddenly attacked with the cholera, had exclaimed, with a furious glance at Cardinal Malipieri:

"I am poisoned!"

The same apprehensions occurred involuntarily to the Jesuit's mind as he tried by useless efforts to escape from the embraces of the Italian emissary; and he could not help muttering to himself:

"This one-eyed fellow is a great deal too fond. I hope there is no poison under his Judas-kisses."

At last little Father Caboccini, being quite out of breath, was obliged to relinquish his hold on Rodin's neck, who, re-adjusting his dirty collar and his old cravat and waistcoat, somewhat in disorder in consequence of this hurricane of caresses, said in a gruff tone:

"Your humble servant, father, but you need not kiss quite so hard."

Without making any answer to this reproach, the little father riveted his one eye upon Rodin with an expression of enthusiasm and exclaimed, while he accompanied his words with petulant gestures:

"At last I see the soupaire light of our sacred Company, and can salute him from my hearta vonse mora, vonse mora."

As the little father had already recovered his breath, and was about to rush once again into Rodin's arms, the latter stepped back hastily, and held out his arm to keep him off, saying, in allusion to the illogical metaphor employed by Father Caboccini:

"First of all, father, one does not embrace a light—and then I am not a light—I am a humble and obscure laborer in the Lord's vineyard."

The Roman replied with enthusiasm (we shall henceforth translate his *patois*):

"You are right, father; we cannot embrace a light, but we can prostrate ourselves before it, and admire its dazzling brightness."

So saying, Caboccini was about to suit the action to the word, and to

prostrate himself before Rodin, had not the latter prevented this mode of adulation by seizing the Roman by the arm and exclaiming:

"This is mere idolatry, father. Pass over my qualities and tell me what is the object of your journey."

"The object, my dear father, fills me with joy and happiness. I have endeavored to show you my affection by my caresses, for my heart is overflowing. I have hardly been able to restrain myself during my journey hither, for my heart rushed to meet you. The object transports, delights, enchants me ——"

"But what enchants you?" cried Rodin, exasperated by these Italian exaggerations. "What is the object?"

"This rescript of our very reverend and excellent General will inform you, my dear father."

Cabocchini drew from his pocket-book a folded paper, with three seals, which he kissed respectfully and delivered to Rodin, who himself kissed it in his turn, and opened it with visible anxiety.

While he read it, the countenance of the Jesuit remained impassible, but the pulsations of the arteries on his temples announced his internal agitation.

Yet he put the letter coolly into his pocket, and looking at the Roman, said to him:

"Be it as our excellent General has commanded!"

"Then, father," cried Cabocchini, with a new effusion of tenderness and admiration, "I shall be the shadow of your light, and, in fact, your second self. I shall have the happiness of being always with you, day and night, and of acting as your *socius*, since, after having allowed you to be without one for some time, according to your wish, and for the interest of our blessed Company, our excellent General now thinks fit to send me from Rome, to fill that post about your person—an unexpected, an immense favor, which fills me with gratitude to our General, and with love to you, my dear, my excellent father!"

"It is well played," thought Rodin; "but I am not so soft, and 'tis only among the blind that your cyclops are kings!"

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The evening of the day in which this scene took place between the Jesuit and his new *socius*, Nini Moulin, after receiving in presence of Cabocchini the instructions of Rodin, went straight to Madame de la Sainte-Colombe's.

CHAPTER LVIII

MADAME DE LA SAINTE-COLOMBE



THE person who, at the commencement of this story, had been to visit the estate and mansion of Cardoville, with the intention of purchasing that property, had made her fortune in a milliner's shop, established in the wooden galleries of the Palais-Royal about the time of the entrance of the Allies into Paris. It was a singular kind of shop, in which the young women looked always prettier and fresher than the caps and bonnets they sold.

It would be difficult to say by what means this creature had contrived to realize a considerable fortune, on which the reverend fathers had cast their eyes, perfectly indifferent as to its origin, provided they could put it into their pockets, *ad majorem Dei gloriam*. They proceeded according to the A, B, C of their trade.

The woman had a weak, vulgar mind, and the reverend fathers, introducing themselves to her, had taken care not to blame too harshly her abominable antecedents. They had even found means to explain away these *peccadilloes*, for their morality is easy and accommodating; but they had at the same time declared to her that even as a calf may become a cow, a *peccadillo* keeps growing while unrepented of, and may at last become an enormous sin; and in conjunction with this idea of sin they introduced the *phantasmagoria* of the devil and his horns, the fire and the brimstone—while, on the other hand, should these *peccadilloes* be atoned for in time by some pious and generous donation to their society, they would undertake to send Lucifer back to his furnace and to obtain for the Sainte-Colombe, still in consideration of value received, a good place in the kingdom of the elect.

Notwithstanding the general success of these means, the conversion in this instance was attended with numerous difficulties. The Sainte-Colombe, subject from time to time to terrible returns of youth, had already worn out two or three directors.

And even Nini Moulin, who himself coveted the hand and fortune

of this creature, had in some degree interfered with the projects of the reverend fathers.

At the time when the religious writer went as an agent of Rodin to the Sainte-Colombe, that lady occupied a first-floor in the Rue de Richelieu; for, in spite of her notions of retirement, she still took infinite pleasure in the noise and bustle of a crowded and busy street.

The apartments were richly furnished, but almost always dirty and in disorder, notwithstanding, or perhaps because of, the presence of two or three servants, whom the Sainte-Colombe treated by turns with the most easy familiarity or the most furious abuse.

We shall introduce the reader into the sanctuary, where this creature had been for some time in secret conference with Nini Moulin.

The would-be convert of the reverend fathers lay in state on a mahogany couch, covered with crimson silk. She had two cats on her knees and a poodle-dog at her feet, while an old gray parrot walked up and down the back of the couch. A green paroquet, less tame or less favored, kept screaming from one of the windows, where it was chained to a stick. The parrot did not scream, but from time to time interfered rudely in the conversation by swearing in the coarsest manner, or using words only fit for the shameful abodes in which he had passed his youth. In truth, this old acquaintance of the Sainte-Colombe had been very badly brought up by his mistress before her conversion, and had even been originally christened by a very vulgar name, which, since she had abjured the error of her ways, had been changed to the more polite appellation of *Barnaby*.

As for the Sainte-Colombe herself, she was a large woman of about fifty years of age, with a broad, red face and something of a beard, and with a very masculine voice. She wore that evening an orange-colored turban and a blue velvet dress, though it was near the end of May, and she had rings on all her fingers and a row of diamonds across her forehead.

Nini Moulin had exchanged the loose coat which he usually wore for a complete suit of black, with the exception of a huge white waistcoat à la *Robespierre*. His hair was combed down upon each side of his pimpled face, and he had assumed a most pious air, which he thought more likely to advance his matrimonial projects, and to counteract the influence of Abbé Corbinet, than his former jovial and very *easy* manners.

At this moment the religious writer, laying aside his own immediate interests, was solely occupied in procuring the success of the delicate mission with which he had been charged by Rodin—a mission which had been skillfully represented to him as perfectly acceptable,

and tending to an honorable result, however hazardous might be the means.

"So," said Nini Moulin, continuing the conversation which had lasted for some time, "she is twenty years of age?"

"At most," answered the Sainte-Colombe, who appeared to be a prey to the most lively curiosity. "But what you tell me is a *rum start*, old fatty." It will be seen that she was already on terms of the most delightful familiarity with the religious writer.

"*Rum* is hardly the word, my dear friend," replied Nini Moulin, with a doubtful air; "you mean to say *touching* and *interesting* — for if you can find by to-morrow the person in question —"

"The deuce! by to-morrow, my buck!" cried the Sainte-Colombe cavalierly. "How fast you go! I have not even heard of her for a year. Stop! I met Antonia a month ago and she told me something about her."

"Well, then, by the means you first thought of you could find out where she is?"

"Yes, old fatty! but it's a great bore when one isn't used to these things."

"What, my dear friend! You that are so good, and labor so hard for your salvation, would *you* hesitate, because of some little disagreeables, to perform an exemplary action, and rescue a young girl from the claws of Satan?"

Here the parrot *Barnaby* uttered two dreadful oaths with admirable distinctness.

In her first movement of indignation, the Sainte-Colombe turned furiously toward the bird, and exclaimed:

"Oh, you ——!" (A worse word than those pronounced by *Barnaby*.) "Will you never mend your manners? Hold your tongue, will you?"

Here came a whole string of words from *Barnaby's* vocabulary.

"He does it on purpose. Only yesterday he made the Abbé Corbinet blush up to his ears. Will you be quiet?"

"If you always reprove *Barnaby* for his errors with such severity," said Nini Moulin, maintaining the most immovable gravity, "you will finish by reforming him. But to return to our affair, you see, my respectable friend, you are naturally most kind and obliging, and you can now take part in a good action — not only, as I told you, rescuing a young girl from the claws of Satan by affording her the means to return to virtue, but also, it may be, restoring to reason a poor mother become mad with grief. And what will it all cost you? Only a little trouble."

"But why this girl more than another, my great fatty? Is she such a rare sort?"

"Certainly, my respectable friend. No other would have the same effect on the poor mother."

"Well, that's true."

"Come, my dear friend, you will make this little effort?"

"You're such a fellow!" said the Sainte-Colombe languishingly; "one must do as you wish."

"Then you promise?" said Nini Moulin hastily.

"I promise; and what's more, I will go about it directly. This evening I shall know if it can be done or not."

So saying, the Sainte-Colombe rose with some difficulty, laid down her two cats on the couch, repulsed her dog with a kick, and rang the bell vigorously.

"You are admirable!" said Nini Moulin, with dignity. "I shall never forget this as long as I live."

"Don't think it, fatty!" said the Sainte-Colombe, interrupting the religious writer. "It's not for your sake that I consent to do it."

"Then for what is it?" asked Nini Moulin.

"Ah! that's my secret," said the Sainte-Colombe.

Then addressing her waiting-woman, who had just entered the room, she added:

"Child, tell Ratisbonne to fetch a coach, and give me my poppy-colored hat and feathers."

While the attendant went to execute these orders of her mistress, Nini Moulin approached the Sainte-Colombe, and said to her in a modest and insinuating tone:

"You see, my fair friend, that I have not spoken a word this evening of my love. Will you not reward my discretion?"

At this moment the Sainte-Colombe had just taken off her turban. She turned round abruptly, and, placing it on the bald crown of Nini Moulin, burst into a loud laugh.

The religious writer appeared delighted at this mark of confidence, and just as the servant returned with the hat and shawl of her mistress, he pressed the turban passionately to his lips, with a stolen glance at the Sainte-Colombe.

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The next morning after this scene, Rodin, whose countenance wore a triumphant expression, put with his own hand a letter into the post.

This letter was addressed:

"To M. Agricola Baudoin,

"Rue Brise-Miche, No. 2,

"Paris."

CHAPTER LIX

FARINGHEA'S LOVES



It will perhaps be remembered that Djalma, when he heard for the first time that he was beloved by Adrienne, had, in the fullness of his joy, spoken thus to Faringhea, whose treachery he had just discovered:

“You leagued with my enemies, and I had done you no harm. You are wicked, because you are no doubt unhappy. I will strive to make you happy, so that you may be good. Would you have gold? you shall have it. Would you have a friend? though you are a slave, a king’s son offers you his friendship.”

Faringhea had refused the gold, and appeared to accept the friendship of the son of Kadja-sing.

Endowed with remarkable intelligence and extraordinary power of dissimulation, the half-breed had easily persuaded the prince of the sincerity of his repentance, and obtained credit for his gratitude and attachment from so confiding and generous a character. Besides, what motives could Djalma have to suspect the slave, now become his friend?

Certain of the love of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, with whom he passed a portion of every day, her salutary influence would have guarded him against any dangerous counsels or calumnies of the half-caste, a faithful and secret instrument of Rodin, and attached by him to the Company. But Faringhea, whose tact was amazing, did not act so lightly; he never spoke to the prince of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, and waited unobtrusively for the confidential communications into which Djalma was sometimes hurried by his excessive joy.

A few days after the interview last described between Adrienne and Djalma, and on the morrow of the day when Rodin, certain of the success of Nini Moulin’s mission to Sainte-Colombe, had himself put a letter in the post to the address of Agricola Baudoin, the half-caste, who for some time had appeared oppressed with a violent grief, seemed to get so much worse, that the prince, struck with the desponding air of the

man, asked him kindly and repeatedly the cause of his sorrow. But Faringhea, while he gratefully thanked the prince for the interest he took in him, maintained the most absolute silence and reserve on the subject of his grief.

These preliminaries will enable the reader to understand the following scene, which took place about noon in the house in the Rue de Clichy occupied by the Hindoo.

Contrary to his habit, Djalma had not passed the morning with Adrienne. He had been informed the evening before by the young lady that she must ask of him the sacrifice of this whole day, to take the necessary measures to make their marriage sacred and acceptable in the eyes of the world, and yet free from the restrictions which she and Djalma disapproved. As for the means to be employed by Mademoiselle de Cardoville to attain this end, and the name of the pure and honorable person who was to consecrate their union, these were secrets which, not belonging exclusively to the young lady, could not yet be communicated to Djalma.

To the Indian, so long accustomed to devote every instant to Adrienne, this day seemed interminable. By turns a prey to the most burning agitation, and to a kind of stupor in which he plunged himself to escape from the thoughts that caused his tortures, Djalma lay stretched upon a divan, with his face buried in his hands, as if to shut out the view of a too enchanting vision. Suddenly, without knocking at the door, as usual, Faringhea entered the prince's apartment.

At the noise the half-caste made in entering, Djalma started, raised his head, and looked round him with surprise; but, on seeing the pale, agitated countenance of the slave, he rose hastily, and, advancing toward him, exclaimed:

"What is the matter, Faringhea?"

After a moment's silence, and as if struggling with a painful feeling of hesitation, Faringhea threw himself at the feet of Djalma and murmured in a weak, despairing, almost supplicating voice:

"I am very miserable. Pity me, my good lord!"

The tone was so touching, the grief under which the half-breed suffered seemed to give to his features, generally fixed and hard as bronze, such a heart-rending expression, that Djalma was deeply affected, and, bending to raise him from the ground, said to him in a kindly voice:

"Speak to me! Confidence appeases the torments of the heart. Trust me, friend — for my angel herself said to me that happy love cannot bear to see tears about him."

"But unhappy love, miserable love, betrayed love, weeps tears of blood," replied Faringhea, with painful dejection.

"Of what love dost thou speak?" asked Djalma, in surprise.

"I speak of my love," answered the half-caste, with a gloomy air.

"Of *your* love?" said Djalma, more and more astonished; not that the half-caste, still young, and with a countenance of somber beauty, appeared to him incapable of inspiring or feeling the tender passion, but that, until now, he had never imagined him capable of conceiving so deep a sorrow.

"My lord," resumed the half-caste, "you told me that misfortune had made me wicked, and that happiness would make me good. In those words I saw a presentiment, and a noble love entered my heart at the moment when hatred and treachery departed from it. I, the half-savage, found a woman, beautiful and young, to respond to my passion. At least I thought so. But I had betrayed you, my lord, and there is no happiness for a traitor, even though he repent. In my turn I have been shamefully betrayed."

Then seeing the surprise of the prince, the half-caste added, as if overwhelmed with confusion:

"Do not mock me, my lord! The most frightful tortures would not have wrung this confession from me; but you, the son of a king, deigned to call the poor slave your friend!"

"And your friend thanks you for the confidence," answered Djalma. "Far from mocking, he will console you. Mock you! Do you think it possible?"

"Betrayed love merits contempt and insult," said Faringhea bitterly. "Even cowards may point at one with scorn—for in this country the sight of the man deceived in what is dearest to his soul, the very life-blood of his life, only makes people shrug their shoulders and laugh."

"But are you certain of this treachery?" said Djalma mildly. Then he added, with a visible hesitation that proved the goodness of his heart: "Listen to me, and forgive me for speaking of the past! It will only be another proof that I cherish no evil memories, and that I fully believe in your repentance and affection. Remember that I also once thought that she who is the angel of my life did not love me—and yet it was false. Who tells you that you are not, like me, deceived by false appearances?"

"Alas, my lord! could I only believe so! But I dare not hope it. My brain wanders uncertain, I cannot come to any resolution, and therefore I have recourse to you."

"But what causes your suspicions?"

"Her coldness which sometimes succeeds to apparent tenderness. The refusals she gives me in the name of duty. Yes," added the half-caste, after a moment's silence, "she reasons about her love—a proof that she has never loved me, or that she loves me no more."

"On the contrary, she perhaps loves you all the more, that she takes into consideration the interest and the dignity of her love."

"That is what they all say," replied the half-caste, with bitter irony, as he fixed a penetrating look on Djalma; "thus speak all those who



love weakly, coldly; but those who love valiantly never show these insulting suspicions. For them, a word from the man they adore is a command; they do not haggle and bargain for the cruel pleasure of exciting the passion of their lover to madness, and so ruling him more

surely. No, what their lover asks of them, were it to cost life and honor, they would grant it without hesitation — because, with them, the will of the man they love is above every other consideration, divine and human. But those crafty women, whose pride it is to tame and conquer man,— who take delight in irritating his passion, and sometimes appear on the point of yielding to it,—are demons, who rejoice in the tears and torments of the wretch that loves them with the miserable weakness of a child. While we expire with love at their feet, the perfidious creatures are calculating the effects of their refusals, and seeing how far they can go without quite driving their victim to despair. Oh! how cold and cowardly are they, compared to the valiant, true-hearted women who say to the men of their choice: ‘Let me be thine to-day — and to-morrow, come shame, despair, and death — it matters little! Be happy! my life is not worth one tear of thine!’”

Djalma's brow had darkened as he listened. Having kept inviolable the secret of the various incidents of his passion for Mademoiselle de Cardoville, he could not but see in these words a quite involuntary allusion to the delays and refusals of Adrienne. And yet Djalma suffered a moment in his pride, at the thought of considerations and duties that a woman holds dearer than her love. But this bitter and painful thought was soon effaced from the Oriental's mind, thanks to the beneficent influence of the remembrance of Adrienne. His brow again cleared, and he answered the half-caste, who was watching him attentively with a sidelong glance:

“You are deluded by grief. If you have no other reason to doubt her you love than these refusals and vague suspicions, be satisfied! You are perhaps loved better than you can imagine.”

“Alas! would it were so, my lord!” replied the half-caste dejectedly, as if he had been deeply touched by the words of Djalma. “Yet I say to myself: ‘There is for this woman something stronger than love,— delicacy, dignity, honor, what you will,—but she does not love me enough to sacrifice for me this something.’”

“Friend, you are deceived,” answered Djalma mildly, though the words affected him with a painful impression. “The greater the love of a woman, the more it should be chaste and noble. It is love itself that awakens this delicacy and these scruples. He rules, instead of being ruled.”

“That is true,” replied the half-caste, with bitter irony. “Love so rules me that this woman bids me love in her own fashion, and I have only to submit.”

Pausing suddenly, Faringhea hid his face in his hands and heaved a deep-drawn sigh. His features expressed a mixture of hate, rage, and

despair, at once so terrible and so painful that Djalma, more and more affected, exclaimed, as he seized the other's hand:

"Calm this fury, and listen to the voice of friendship! It will disperse this evil influence. Speak to me!"

"No, no! it is too dreadful!"

"Speak, I bid thee."

"No! leave the wretch to his despair!"

"Do you think me capable of that?" said Djalma, with a mixture of mildness and dignity which seemed to make an impression on the half-caste.

"Alas!" replied he, hesitating; "do you wish to hear more, my lord?"

"I wish to hear all."

"Well, then! I have not told you all—for, at the moment for making this confession, shame and the fear of ridicule kept me back. You asked me what reason I had to believe myself betrayed. I spoke to you of vague suspicions, refusals, coldness. That is not all—this evening—"

"Go on!"

"This evening—she made an appointment—with a man that she prefers to me."

"Who told you so?"

"A stranger who pitied my blindness."

"And suppose the man deceives you—or deceives himself?"

"He has offered me proofs of what he advances."

"What proofs?"

"He will enable me this evening to witness the interview. 'It may be,' said he, 'that this appointment may have no guilt in it, notwithstanding appearances to the contrary. Judge for yourself, have courage, and your cruel indecision will be at an end.'"

"And what did you answer?"

"Nothing, my lord. My head wandered as it does now, and I came to you for advice."

Then making a gesture of despair, he proceeded with a savage laugh:

"Advice? It is from the blade of my kandjiar that I should ask counsel! It would answer: 'Blood! blood!'"

Faringhea grasped convulsively the long dagger attached to his girdle. There is a sort of contagion in certain forms of passion. At sight of Faringhea's countenance, agitated by jealous fury, Djalma shuddered—for he remembered the fit of insane rage with which he had been possessed when the Princess de Saint-Dizier had defied Adrienne to contradict her as to the discovery of Agricola Baudoin in her bed-chamber. But then, re-assured by the lady's proud and noble

bearing, Djalma had soon learned to despise the horrible calumny, which Adrienne had not even thought worthy of an answer. Still, two or three times, as the lightning will flash suddenly across the clearest sky, the remembrance of that shameful accusation had crossed the prince's mind like a streak of fire, but had almost instantly vanished, in the serenity and happiness of his ineffable confidence in Adrienne's heart.

These memories, however, while they saddened the mind of Djalma, only made him more compassionate with regard to Faringhea than he might have been without this strange coincidence between the position of the half-caste and his own. Knowing, by his own experience, to what madness a blind fury may be carried, and wishing to tame the half-caste by affectionate kindness, Djalma said to him in a grave and mild tone:

"I offered you my friendship. I will now act toward you as a friend."

But Faringhea, seemingly a prey to a dull and mute frenzy, stood with fixed and haggard eyes, as though he did not hear Djalma.

The latter laid his hand on his shoulder, and resumed:

"Faringhea, listen to me!"

"My lord," said the half-caste, starting abruptly, as from a dream, "forgive me — but ——"

"In the anguish occasioned by these cruel suspicions, it is not of your kandjiar that you must take counsel — but of your friend."

"My lord ——"

"To this interview, which will prove the innocence or the treachery of your beloved, you will do well to go."

"Oh, yes!" said the half-caste in a hollow voice, and with a bitter smile; "I shall be there."

"But you must not go alone."

"What do you mean, my lord?" cried the half-caste. "Who will accompany me?"

"I will."

"You, my lord?"

"Yes,—perhaps to save you from a crime; for I know how blind and unjust is the earliest outburst of rage."

"But that transport gives us revenge!" cried the half-caste, with a cruel smile.

"Faringhea, this day is all my own. I shall not leave you," said the prince resolutely. "Either you shall not go to this interview, or I will accompany you."

The half-caste appeared conquered by this generous perseverance. He fell at the feet of Djalma, pressed the prince's hand respectfully to his forehead and to his lips, and said:

“My lord, be generous to the end ! forgive me !”

“For what should I forgive you ?”

“Before I spoke to you I had the audacity to think of asking for what you have just freely offered. Not knowing to what extent my fury might carry me, I had thought of asking you this favor, which you would not perhaps grant to an equal ; but I did not dare to do it. I shrunk even from the avowal of the treachery I have cause to fear, and I came only to tell you of my misery — because to you alone in all the world I could tell it.”

It is impossible to describe the almost candid simplicity with which the half-breed pronounced these words, and the soft tones mingled with tears which had succeeded his savage fury. Deeply affected, Djalma raised him from the ground and said :

“You were entitled to ask of me a mark of friendship. I am happy in having forestalled you. Courage ! be of good cheer ! I will accompany you to this interview, and, if my hopes do not deceive me, you will find you have been deluded by false appearances.”

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When the night was come, the half-breed and Djalma, wrapped in their cloaks, got into a hackney-coach. Faringhea ordered the coachman to drive to the house inhabited by Sainte-Colombe.

CHAPTER LX

AN EVENING AT SAINTE-COLOMBE'S



LEAVING Djalma and Faringhea in the coach, on their way, a few words are indispensable before continuing this scene. Nini Moulin, ignorant of the real object of the step he took at the instigation of Rodin, had, on the evening before, according to orders received from the latter, offered a considerable sum to Sainte-Colombe to obtain from that creature (still singularly rapacious) the use of her apartments for a whole day. Sainte-Colombe having accepted this proposition, too advantageous to be refused, had set out that morning with her servants, to whom she wished, she said, in return for their good services, to give a day's pleasure in the country.

Master of the house, Rodin, in a black wig, blue spectacles, and a cloak, and with his mouth and chin buried in a worsted comforter,—in a word, perfectly disguised,—had gone that morning to take a look at the apartments and to give his instructions to the half-caste. The latter, in two hours from the departure of the Jesuit, had, thanks to his address and intelligence, completed the most important preparations, and returned in haste to Djalma to play with detestable hypocrisy the scene at which we have just been present.

During the ride from the Rue de Clichy to the Rue de Richelieu, Faringhea appeared plunged in a mournful reverie. Suddenly he said to Djalma in a quick tone:

“My lord, if I am betrayed I must have vengeance.”

“Contempt is a terrible revenge,” answered Djalma.

“No, no,” replied the half-caste, with an accent of repressed rage. “It is not enough. The nearer the moment approaches the more I feel I must have blood.”

“Listen to me ——”

“My lord, have pity on me! I was a coward to draw back from my revenge. Let me leave you, my lord! I will go alone to this interview.”

So saying, Faringhea made a movement as if he would spring from the carriage.

Djalma held him by the arm, and said:

"Remain! I will not leave you. If you are betrayed you shall not shed blood. Contempt will avenge and friendship will console you."

"No, no, my lord; I am resolved. When I have killed — then I will kill myself," cried the half-caste, with savage excitement. "This kandjiar for the false ones," added he, laying his hand on his dagger; "the poison in the hilt for me."

"Faringhea ——"

"If I resist you, my lord, forgive me. My destiny must be accomplished."

Time pressed, and Djalma, despairing to calm the other's ferocious rage, resolved to have recourse to a stratagem.

After some minutes' silence he said to Faringhea:

"I will not leave you. I will do all I can to save you from a crime. If I do not succeed, the blood you shed be on your own head. This hand shall never again be locked in yours."

These words appeared to make a deep impression on Faringhea. He breathed a long sigh and, bowing his head upon his breast, remained silent and full of thought.

Djalma prepared, by the faint light of the lamps reflected in the interior of the coach, to throw himself suddenly on the half-caste and disarm him. But the latter, who saw at a glance the intention of the prince, drew his kandjiar abruptly from his girdle, and, holding it still in its sheath, said to the prince in a half-solemn, half-savage tone:

"This dagger, in a strong hand, is terrible; and in this phial is one of the most subtle poisons of our country."

He touched a spring, and the knob at the top of the hilt rose like a lid, discovering the mouth of a small crystal phial concealed in this murderous weapon.

"Two or three drops of this poison upon the lips," resumed the half-caste, "and death comes slowly and peacefully, in a few hours and without pain. Only, for the first symptom, the nails turn blue. But he who emptied this phial at a draught would fall dead, as if struck by lightning."

"Yes," replied Djalma; "I know that our country produces such mysterious poisons. But why lay such stress on the murderous properties of this weapon?"

"To show you, my lord, that this kandjiar would insure the success and impunity of my vengeance. With the blade I could destroy, and by the poison escape from human justice. Well, my lord, this kandjiar,

take it, I give it up to you, I renounce my vengeance rather than render myself unworthy to clasp again your hand?"

He presented the dagger to the prince, who, as pleased as surprised at this unexpected determination, hastily secured the terrible weapon beneath his own girdle, while the half-breed continued, in a voice of emotion:

"Keep this kandjia, my lord, and when you have seen and heard all that we go to hear and see, you shall either give me the dagger to strike a wretch or the poison to die without striking. You shall command; I will obey."

Djalma was about to reply, when the coach stopped at the house inhabited by Sainte-Colombe.

The prince and the half-caste, well enveloped in their mantles, entered a dark porch, and the door was closed after them. Faringhea exchanged a few words with the porter, and the latter gave him a key.

The two Orientals soon arrived at Sainte-Colombe's apartments, which had two doors opening upon the landing-place, besides a private entrance from the court-yard. As he put the key into the lock, Faringhea said to Djalma, in an agitated voice:

"Pity my weakness, my lord, but at this terrible moment I tremble and hesitate. It were perhaps better to doubt, or to forget."

Then, as the prince was about to answer, the half-caste exclaimed:

"No, we must have no cowardice!" And opening the door precipitately, he entered, followed by Djalma.

When the door was again closed, the prince and the half-caste found themselves in a dark and narrow passage.

"Your hand, my lord; let me guide you. Walk lightly," said Faringhea in a low whisper.

He extended his hand to the prince, who took hold of it, and they both advanced silently through the darkness. After leading Djalma some distance and opening and closing several doors, the half-caste stopped abruptly, and, abandoning the hand which he had hitherto held, said to the prince:

"My lord, the decisive moment approaches; let us wait here for a few seconds."

A profound silence followed these words of the half-caste. The darkness was so complete that Djalma could distinguish nothing. In about a minute he heard Faringhea moving away from him; and then a door was suddenly opened, and as abruptly closed and locked. This circumstance made Djalma somewhat uneasy. By a mechanical movement he laid his hand upon his dagger, and advanced cautiously toward the side where he supposed the door to be.

Suddenly the half-caste's voice struck upon his ear, though it was impossible to guess whence it came.

"My lord," it said, "you told me you were my friend. I act as a



friend. If I have employed stratagem to bring you hither, it is because the blindness of your fatal passion would otherwise have prevented your accompanying me. The Princess de Saint-Dizier named to you Agriola Baudoin, the lover of Adrienne de Cardoville. Listen, look, judge!"

The voice ceased. It appeared to have issued from one corner of the room. Djalma, still in darkness, perceived too late into what a snare he had fallen, and trembled with rage — almost with alarm.

“Faringhea!” he exclaimed; “where am I? where are you? Open the door, on your life! I would leave this place instantly.”

Extending his arms, the prince advanced hastily several steps, but he only touched a tapestried wall; he followed it, hoping to find the door, and he at length found it; but it was locked and resisted all his efforts. He continued his researches, and came to a fireplace with no fire in it, and to a second door, equally fast. In a few moments he had thus made the circle of the room, and found himself again at the fireplace.

The anxiety of the prince increased more and more. He called Faringhea, in a voice trembling with passion.

There was no answer.

Profound silence reigned without, and complete darkness within. Ere long a perfumed vapor of indescribable sweetness, but very subtle and penetrating, spread itself insensibly through the little room in which Djalma was. It might be that the orifice of a tube, passing through one of the doors of the room, introduced this balmy current. At the height of angry and terrible thoughts, Djalma paid no attention to this odor; but soon the arteries of his temples began to beat violently, a burning heat seemed to circulate rapidly through his veins, he felt a sensation of pleasure, his resentment died gradually away, and a mild, ineffable torpor crept over him, without his being fully conscious of the mental transformation that was taking place. Yet, by a last effort of the wavering will, Djalma advanced once more to try and open one of the doors; he found it indeed, but at this place the vapor was so strong that its action redoubled, and, unable to move a step farther, Djalma was obliged to support himself by leaning against the wall.

Then a strange thing happened. A faint light spread itself gradually through an adjoining apartment, and Djalma now perceived for the first time the existence of a little round window in the wall of the room in which he was.

On the side of the prince this opening was protected by a slight but strong railing, which hardly intercepted the view. On the other side a thick piece of plate-glass was fixed at the distance of two or three inches from the railing in question.

The room which Djalma saw through this window, and through which the faint light was now gradually spreading, was richly furnished. Between two windows, hung with crimson silk curtains, stood a kind of wardrobe, with a looking-glass front; opposite the fireplace, in which

glowed the burning coals, was a long, wide divan, furnished with cushions.

In another second a woman entered this apartment. Her face and figure were invisible, being wrapped in a long, hooded mantle of peculiar form and a dark color.

The sight of this mantle made Djalma start. To the pleasure he at first felt succeeded a feverish anxiety, like the growing fumes of intoxication. There was that strange buzzing in his ears which we experience when we plunge into deep waters. It was in a kind of delirium that Djalma looked on at what was passing in the next room.

The woman who had just appeared entered with caution, almost with fear. Drawing aside one of the window-curtains, she glanced through the closed blinds into the street. Then she returned slowly to the fireplace, where she stood for a moment pensive, still carefully enveloped in her mantle. Completely yielding to the influence of the vapor, which deprived him of his presence of mind, forgetting Faringha and all the circumstances that had accompanied his arrival at this house, Djalma concentrated all the powers of his attention on the spectacle before him, at which he seemed to be present as in a dream.

Suddenly Djalma saw the woman leave the fireplace and advance toward the looking-glass. Turning her face toward it, she allowed the mantle to glide down to her feet. Djalma was thunderstruck. He saw the face of Adrienne de Cardoville.

Yes, Adrienne, as he had seen her the night before, attired as during her interview with the Princess de Saint-Dizier — the light-green dress, the rose-colored ribbons, the white bead ornaments. A network of white beads concealed her back-hair, and harmonized admirably with the shining gold of her ringlets. Finally, as far as the Hindoo could judge through the railing and the thick glass and in the faint light, it was the figure of Adrienne, with her marble shoulders and swan-like neck, so proud and so graceful.

In a word, he could not, he did not, doubt that it was Adrienne de Cardoville.

Djalma was bathed in a burning dew, his dizzy excitement increased, and with bloodshot eye and heaving bosom he remained motionless, gazing almost without the power of thought. The young lady, with her back still turned toward Djalma, arranged her hair with graceful art, took off the network which formed her head-dress, placed it on the chimney-piece, and began to unfasten her gown; then, withdrawing from the looking-glass, she disappeared for an instant from Djalma's view.

"*She is expecting Agricola Baudoin, her lover,*" said a voice, which seemed to proceed from the wall of the dark room in which Djalma was

Notwithstanding his bewilderment, these terrible words, "*She is expecting Agricola Baudoin, her lover,*" passed like a stream of fire through the brain and heart of the prince.

A cloud of blood came over his eyes, he uttered a hollow groan, which the thickness of the glass prevented from being heard in the next room, and broke his nails in attempting to tear down the iron railing before the window.

Having reached this paroxysm of delirious rage, Djalma saw the uncertain light grow still fainter, as if it had been discreetly obscured, and, through the vapory shadow that hung before him, he perceived the young lady returning, clad in a long white dressing-gown, and with her golden curls floating over her naked arms and shoulders.

She advanced cautiously in the direction of a door which was hid from Djalma's view. At this moment one of the doors of the apartment in which the prince was concealed was gently opened by an invisible hand. Djalma noticed it by the click of the lock and by the current of fresh air which streamed upon his face, for he could see nothing. This door left open for Djalma, like that in the next room, to which the young lady had drawn near, led to a sort of antechamber communicating with the stairs, which some one now rapidly ascended and, stopping short, knocked twice at the outer door.

"Here comes Agricola Baudoin. Look and listen!" said the same voice that the prince had already heard.

Mad, intoxicated, but with the fixed idea and reckless determination of a madman or a drunkard, Djalma drew the dagger which Faringhea had left in his possession, and stood in motionless expectation.

Hardly were the two knocks heard before the young lady quitted the apartment, from which streamed a faint ray of light, ran to the door of the staircase, so that some faint glimmer reached the place where Djalma stood watching, his dagger in his hand. He saw the young lady pass across the antechamber and approach the door of the staircase, where she said in a whisper:

"Who is there?"

"It is I — Agricola Baudoin," answered from without a manly voice.

What followed was rapid as lightning, and must be conceived rather than described. Hardly had the young lady drawn the bolt of the door, hardly had Agricola Baudoin stepped across the threshold, than Djalma, with the bound of a tiger, stabbed, as it were, at once, so rapid were the strokes, both the young lady, who fell dead on the floor, and Agricola, who sank dangerously wounded by the side of the unfortunate victim.

This scene of murder, rapid as thought, took place in the midst of a

half obscurity. Suddenly the faint light from the chamber was completely extinguished, and a second later Djalma felt his arm seized in the darkness by an iron grasp, and the voice of Faringhea whispered :

“ You are avenged. Come ; we can secure our retreat.”

Inert, stupefied at what he had done, Djalma offered no resistance, and let himself be dragged by the half-caste into the inner apartment, from which there was another way out.

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When Rodin had exclaimed, in his admiration of the generative power of thought, that the word NECKLACE had been the germ of the infernal project he then contemplated, it was that chance had brought to his mind the remembrance of the too famous affair of the diamond necklace in which a woman, thanks to her vague resemblance to Queen Marie Antoinette, being dressed like that princess, and favored by the uncertainty of a twilight, had played so skillfully the part of her unfortunate sovereign as to make the Cardinal Prince de Rohan, though familiar with the court, the complete dupe of the illusion. Having once determined on his execrable design, Rodin had sent Jacques Dumoulin to Sainte-Colombe, without telling him the real object of his mission, to ask this experienced woman to procure a fine young girl, tall, and with red hair. Once found, a costume exactly resembling that worn by Adrienne, and of which the Princess de Saint-Dizier gave the description to Rodin (though herself ignorant of this new plot), was to complete the deception. The rest is known, or may be guessed. The unfortunate girl who acted as Adrienne's double believed she was only aiding in a jest. As for Agricola, he had received a letter in which he was invited to a meeting that might be of the greatest importance to Mademoiselle de Cardoville.

CHAPTER LXI

THE NUPTIAL BED



HE mild light of a circular lamp of oriental alabaster, suspended from the ceiling by three silver chains, spreads a faint luster through the bed-chamber of Adrienne de Cardoville.

The large ivory bedstead, inlaid with mother-of-pearl, is not at present occupied, and almost disappears beneath snowy curtains of lace and muslin, transparent and vapory as clouds. On the white marble mantel-piece, from beneath which the fire throws ruddy beams on the ermine carpet, is the usual basket filled with a bush of red camellias, in the midst of their shining green leaves. A pleasant aromatic odor, rising from a warm and perfumed bath in the next room, penetrates every corner of the bed-chamber. All without is calm and silent. It is hardly eleven o'clock. The ivory door opposite to that which leads to the bath-room opens slowly. Djalma appears. Two hours have elapsed since he committed a double murder, and believed that he had killed Adrienne in a fit of fury.

The servants of Mademoiselle de Cardoville, accustomed to Djalma's daily visits, no longer announced his arrival, and admitted him without difficulty, having received no orders to the contrary from their mistress. He had never before entered the bed-chamber, but, knowing that the apartment the lady occupied was on the first floor of the house, he had easily found it.

As he entered that virgin sanctuary, his countenance was pretty calm, so well did he control his feelings; only a slight paleness tarnished the brilliant amber of his complexion. He wore that day a robe of purple cashmere, striped with silver—a color which did not show the stains of blood upon it. Djalma closed the door after him, and tore off his white turban, for it seemed to him as if a band of hot iron encircled

his brow. His dark hair streamed around his handsome face. He crossed his arms upon his bosom and looked slowly about him. When his eyes rested on Adrienne's bed, he started suddenly and his cheek grew purple. Then he drew his hand across his brow, hung down his head, and remained standing for some moments in a dream, motionless as a statue.

After a mournful silence of a few seconds' duration, Djalma fell upon his knees and raised his eyes to heaven. The Asiatic's countenance was bathed in tears, and no longer expressed any violent passion. On his features was no longer the stamp of hate, or despair, or the ferocious joy of vengeance gratified. It was rather the expression of a grief at once simple and immense. For several minutes he was almost choked with sobs, and the tears ran freely down his cheeks.

"Dead, dead!" he murmured, in a half-stifled voice. "She, who this morning slept so peacefully in this chamber. And I have killed her. Now that she is dead, what is her treachery to me? I should not have killed her for that. She had betrayed me; she loved the man whom I slew — she loved him! Alas, I could not hope to gain the preference," added he, with a touching mixture of resignation and remorse; "I, poor, untaught youth — how could I merit her love? It was my fault that she did not love me; but, always generous, she concealed from me her indifference that she might not make me too unhappy — and for that I killed her. What was her crime? Did she not meet me freely? Did she not open to me her dwelling? Did she not allow me to pass whole days with her? No doubt she tried to love me, and could not. I loved her with all the faculties of my soul, but my love was not such as she required. For that I should not have killed her. But a fatal delusion seized me, and after it was done, I woke as from a dream. Alas, it was not a dream: I have killed her. And yet, until this evening, what happiness I owed to her, what hope, what joy. She made my heart better, nobler, more generous. All came from her," added the Indian, with a new burst of grief. "That remained with me. No one could take from me that treasure of the past; that ought to have consoled me. But why think of it? I struck them both, her and the man, without a struggle. It was a cowardly murder, the ferocity of the tiger that tears its innocent prey."

Djalma buried his face in his hands. Then, drying his tears, he resumed:

"I know, clearly, that I mean to die also. But my death will not restore her to life."

He rose from the ground and drew from his girdle Faringhea's bloody dagger; then, taking the little phial from the hilt, he threw the

blood-stained blade upon the ermine carpet, the immaculate whiteness of which was thus slightly stained with red.

"Yes," resumed Djalma, holding the phial with a convulsive grasp, "I know well that I am about to die. It is right. Blood for blood; my life for hers. How happens it that my steel did not turn aside? How could I kill her? But it is done, and my heart is full of remorse and sorrow and inexpressible tenderness, and I have come here to die."

"Here, in this chamber," he continued, "the heaven of my burning visions!" And then he added with a heart-rending accent, as he again buried his face in his hands, "Dead! dead!"

"Well! I too shall soon be dead," he resumed in a firmer voice. "But, no! I will die slowly, gradually. A few drops of the poison will suffice, and when I am quite certain of dying, my remorse will perhaps be less terrible. Yesterday she pressed my hand when we parted. Who could have foretold me this?"

The Indian raised the phial resolutely to his lips. He drank a few drops of the liquor it contained and replaced it on a little ivory table close to Adrienne's bed.

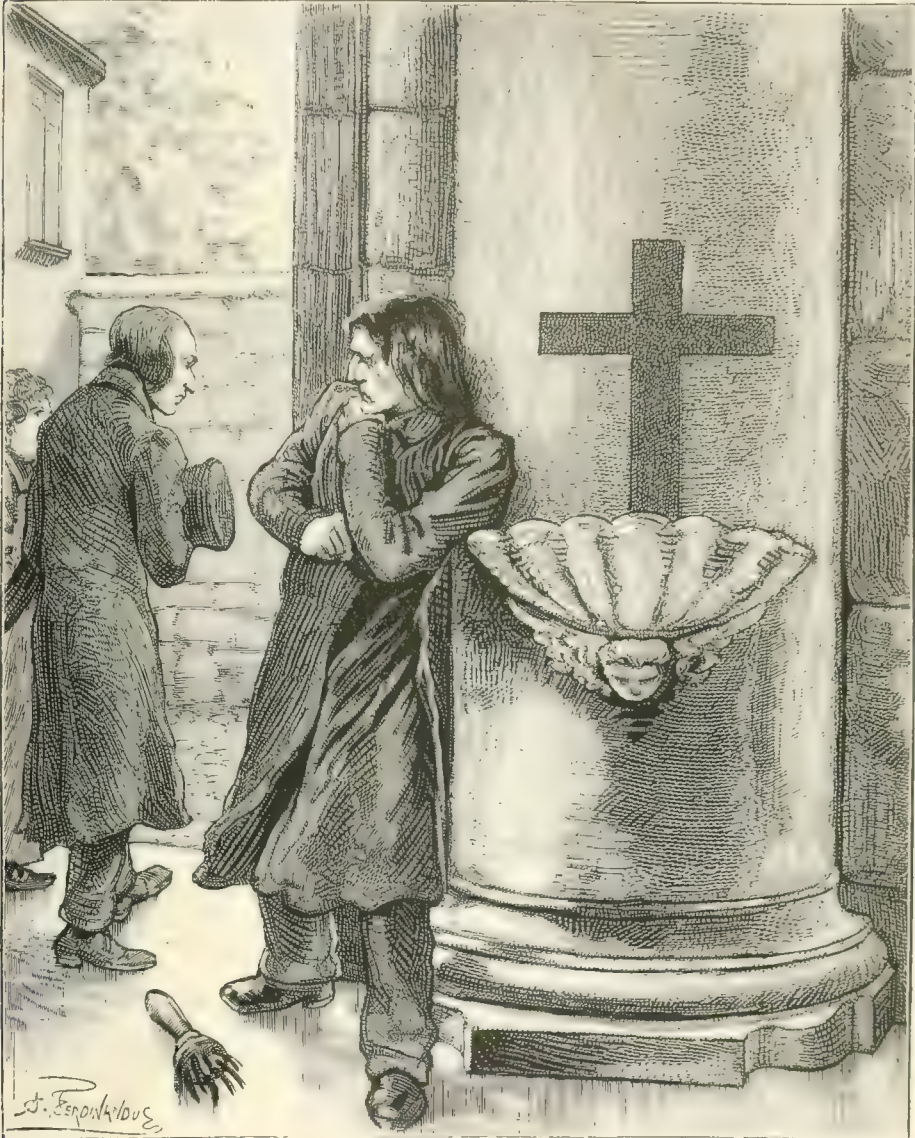
"This liquor is sharp and hot," said he. "Now I am certain to die. Oh! that I may still have time to feast on the sight and perfume of this chamber—to lay my dying head on the couch where she has reposed."

Djalma fell on his knees beside the bed and leaned against it his burning brow. At this moment the ivory door which communicated with the bath-room rolled gently on its hinges, and Adrienne entered.

The young lady had just sent away her woman, who had assisted to undress her. She wore a long muslin wrapper of lustrous whiteness. Her golden hair, neatly arranged in little plaits, formed two bands, which gave to her sweet face an extremely juvenile air. Her snowy complexion was slightly tinged with rose color from the warmth of the perfumed bath, which she used for a few seconds every evening. When she opened the ivory door and placed her little naked foot, in its white satin slipper, upon the ermine carpet, Adrienne was dazzlingly beautiful. Happiness sparkled in her eyes and adorned her brow. All the difficulties relative to her union with Djalma had now been removed. In two days she would be his. The sight of the nuptial chamber oppressed her with a vague and ineffable languor.

The ivory door had been opened so gently, the lady's first steps were so soft upon the fur carpet, that Djalma, still leaning against the bed, had heard nothing. But suddenly a cry of surprise and alarm struck upon his ear. He turned round abruptly. Adrienne stood before him.

With an impulse of modesty, Adrienne closed her night-dress over her bosom and hastily drew back, still more afflicted than angry at what she considered a guilty attempt on the part of Djalma.



Cruelly hurt and offended, she was about to reproach him with his conduct, when she perceived the dagger which he had thrown down upon the ermine carpet. At the sight of this weapon, and the expression of fear and stupor which petrified the features of Djalma, who

remained kneeling, motionless, with his body thrown back, his hands stretched out, his eyes fixed and wildly staring, Adrienne, no longer dreading an amorous surprise, was seized with an indescribable terror, and, instead of flying from the prince, advanced several steps toward him, and said in an agitated voice, while she pointed to the kandjar:

“My friend, why are you here; what ails you; why this dagger?”

Djalma made no answer. At first the presence of Adrienne seemed to him a vision, which he attributed to the excitement of his brain, already, it might be, under the influence of the poison. But when the soft voice sounded in his ears—when his heart bounded with the species of electric shock which he always felt when he met the gaze of that woman so ardently beloved—when he had contemplated for an instant that adorable face, so fresh and fair, in spite of its expression of deep uneasiness—Djalma understood that he was not the sport of a dream, but that Mademoiselle de Cardoville was really before his eyes.

Then, as he began fully to grasp the thought that Adrienne was not dead, though he could not at all explain the prodigy of her resurrection, the Hindoo's countenance was transfigured, the pale gold of his complexion became warm and red, his eyes (tarnished by tears of remorse) shone with new radiance, and his features, so lately contracted with terror and despair, expressed all the phases of the most ecstatic joy. Advancing, still on his knees, toward Adrienne, he lifted up to her his trembling hands, and, too deeply affected to pronounce a word, he gazed on her with so much amazement, love, adoration, gratitude, that the young lady, fascinated by those inexplicable looks, remained mute also, motionless also, and felt, by the precipitate beating of her heart and by the shudder which ran through her frame, that there was here some dreadful mystery to be unfolded.

At last Djalma, clasping his hands together, exclaimed with an accent impossible to describe:

“Thou art not dead!”

“Dead!” repeated the young lady in amazement.

“It was not thou, really not thou, whom I killed? God is kind and just!”

And as he pronounced these words with intense joy, the unfortunate youth forgot the victim whom he had sacrificed in error.

More and more alarmed, and again glancing at the dagger, on which she now perceived marks of blood,—a terrible evidence in confirmation of the words of Djalma,—Mademoiselle de Cardoville exclaimed:

“You have killed some one, Djalma! Oh! what does he say? It is dreadful!”

"You are alive — I see you — you are here," said Djalma, in a voice trembling with rapture. "You are here — beautiful! pure! for it was not you! Oh, no! had it been you the steel would have turned back upon myself."

"You have killed some one?" cried the young lady, beside herself with this unforeseen revelation, and clasping her hands in horror. "Why, whom did you kill?"

"I do not know. A woman that was like you — a man that I thought your lover. It was an illusion, a frightful dream — you are alive — you are here!"

And the Oriental wept for joy.

"A dream? But no, it is not a dream. There is blood upon that dagger!" cried the young lady, as she pointed wildly to the *kandjar*. "I tell you there is blood upon it!"

"Yes. I threw it down just now when I took the poison from it, thinking that I had killed you."

"The poison!" exclaimed Adrienne, and her teeth chattered convulsively. "What poison?"

"I thought I had killed you, and I came here to die."

"Oh, wherefore? Who is to die?" cried the young lady, almost in delirium.

"I," replied Djalma, with inexpressible tenderness. "I thought I had killed you — and I took poison."

"You!" exclaimed Adrienne, becoming pale as death. "You!"

"Yes."

"Oh! it is not true!" said the young lady, shaking her head.

"Look," said the Asiatic. Mechanically he turned toward the bed — toward the little ivory table on which sparkled the crystal phial.

With a sudden movement, swifter than thought, swifter, it may be, than the will, Adrienne rushed to the table, seized the phial and applied it eagerly to her lips.

Djalma had hitherto remained on his knees; but he now uttered a terrible cry, made one spring to the drinker's side, and dragged away the phial, which seemed almost glued to her mouth.

"No matter! I have swallowed as much as you," said Adrienne, with an air of gloomy triumph.

For an instant there followed an awful silence. Adrienne and Djalma gazed upon each other, mute, motionless, horror-struck. The young lady was the first to break this mournful silence, and said in a tone which she tried to make calm and steady:

"Well, what is there extraordinary in this? You have killed, and death must expiate your crime. It is just. I will not survive you.

That also is natural enough. Why look at me thus? This poison has a sharp taste—does it act quickly? Tell me, my Djalma!”

The prince did not answer. Shuddering through all his frame, he looked down upon his hands. Faringhea had told the truth; a slight violet tint appeared already beneath the nails. Death was approaching, slowly, almost insensibly, but not the less certain. Overwhelmed with despair at the thought that Adrienne, too, was about to die, Djalma felt his courage fail him. He uttered a long groan and hid his face in his hands. His knees shook under him, and he fell down upon the bed, near which he was standing.

“Already?” cried the young lady in horror, as she threw herself on her knees at Djalma’s feet. “Death already? Do you hide your face from me?”

In her fright she pulled his hands from before his face. That face was bathed in tears.

“No, not yet,” murmured he through his sobs. “The poison is slow.”

“Really!” cried Adrienne, with ineffable joy. Then, kissing the hands of Djalma, she added tenderly, “If the poison is slow, why do you weep?”

“For you! for you!” said the Indian, in a heart-rending tone.

“Think not of me,” replied Adrienne resolutely. “You have killed, and we must expiate the crime. I know not what has taken place; but I swear by our love that you did not do evil for evil’s sake. There is some horrible mystery in all this.”

“On a pretense which I felt bound to believe,” replied Djalma, speaking quickly, and panting for breath, “Faringhea led me to a certain house. Once there, he told me that you had betrayed me. I did not believe him, but I know not what strange dizziness seized upon me—and then, through a half obscurity, I saw you——”

“Me!”

“No—not you—but a woman resembling you, dressed like you, so that I believed the illusion—and then there came a man—and you flew to meet him—and I—mad with rage—stabbed her, stabbed him, saw them fall—and so came here to die. And now I find you only to cause your death. Oh, misery! misery! that you should die through me!”

And Djalma, this man of formidable energy, began again to weep with the weakness of a child. At sight of this deep, touching, passionate despair, Adrienne, with that admirable courage which women alone possess in love, thought only of consoling Djalma. By an effort of superhuman passion, as the prince revealed to her this infernal plot, the lady’s countenance became so splendid with an expression of love and

happiness, that the East Indian looked at her in amazement, fearing for an instant that he must have lost his reason.

"No more tears, my adored!" cried the young lady exultingly. "No more tears, but only smiles of joy and love. Our cruel enemies shall not triumph."

"What do you say?"

"They wished to make us miserable. We pity them. Our felicity shall be the envy of the world!"

"Adrienne—bethink you——"

"Oh, I have all my senses about me. Listen to me, my adored. I now understand it all. Falling into a snare which these wretches spread for you, you have committed murder. Now, in this country, murder leads to infamy, or the scaffold—and to-morrow—to-night, perhaps—you would be thrown into prison. But our enemies have said: 'A man like Prince Djalma does not wait for infamy—he kills himself. A woman like Adrienne de Cardoville does not survive the disgrace or death of her lover—she prefers to die. Therefore a frightful death awaits them both,' said the black-robed men; 'and that immense inheritance, which we covet——'"

"And for you—so young, so beautiful, so innocent—death is frightful, and these monsters triumph!" cried Djalma. "They have spoken the truth!"

"They have lied!" answered Adrienne. "Our death shall be celestial. This poison is slow—and I adore you, my Djalma!"

She spoke those words in a low voice, trembling with passionate love, and, leaning upon Djalma's knees, approached so near that he felt her warm breath upon his cheek. As he felt that breath and saw the humid flame that darted from the large, swimming eyes of Adrienne, whose half-opened lips were becoming of a still deeper and brighter hue, the Indian started—his young blood boiled in his veins—he forgot everything—his despair, and the approach of death, which as yet (as with Adrienne) only showed itself in a kind of feverish ardor. His face, like the young girl's, became once more splendidly beautiful.

"Oh, my lover! my husband! how beautiful you are!" said Adrienne, with idolatry. "Those eyes—that brow—those lips—how I love them! How many times has the remembrance of your grace and beauty, coupled with your love, unsettled my reason and shaken my resolves—even to this moment, when I am wholly yours! Yes, Heaven wills that we should be united. Only this morning I gave to the apostolic man that was to bless our union, in thy name and mine, a royal gift—a gift that will bring joy and peace to the heart of many an unfortunate creature. Then what have we to regret, my beloved?"

Our immortal souls will pass away in a kiss, and ascend, full of love, to that God who is all love!"

"Adrienne!"

"Djalma!"

.
The light, transparent curtains fell like a cloud over that nuptial and funereal couch. Yes, funereal; for, two hours after, Adrienne and Djalma breathed their last sigh in a voluptuous agony.

CHAPTER LXII

A DUEL TO THE DEATH

ADRIENNE and Djalma died on the 30th of May. The following scene took place on the 31st, the eve of the day appointed for the last convocation of the heirs of Marius de Rennepont.

The reader will no doubt remember the room occupied by M. Hardy in the "house of retreat" in the Rue de Vaugirard — a gloomy and retired apartment, opening on a dreary little garden, planted with yew-trees and surrounded by high walls. To reach this chamber it was necessary to cross two vast rooms, the doors of which, once shut, intercepted all noise and communication from without. Bearing this in mind, we may go on with our narrative.

For the last three or four days Father d'Aigrigny occupied this apartment. He had not chosen it, but had been induced to accept it under most plausible pretexts, given him at the instigation of Rodin. It was about noon. Seated in an arm-chair by the window opening on the little garden, Father d'Aigrigny held in his hand a newspaper in which he read as follows, under the head of "Paris":

"Eleven P. M.—A most horrible and tragical event has just excited the greatest consternation in the quarter of the Rue de Richelieu. A double murder has been committed on the persons of a young man and woman. The girl was killed on the spot by the stroke of a dagger; hopes are entertained of saving the life of the young man. The crime is attributed to jealousy. The officers of justice are investigating the matter. We shall give full particulars to-morrow."

When he read these lines, Father d'Aigrigny threw down the paper and remained in deep thought.

"It is incredible," said he with bitter envy, in allusion to Rodin. "He has attained his end. Hardly one of his anticipations has been defeated. This family is annihilated by the mere play of the passions,

good and evil, that he has known how to set in motion. He said it would be so. Oh, I must confess," added Father d'Aigrigny, with a jealous and hateful smile, "that Rodin is a man of rare dissimulation, patience, energy, obstinacy, and intelligence. Who would have told me a few months ago, when he wrote under my orders, a discreet and humble *socius*, that he had already conceived the most audacious ambition, and dared to lift his eyes to the Holy See itself? That, thanks to intrigues and corruption, pursued with wondrous ability, these views were not so unreasonable? Nay, that this infernal ambition would soon be realized, were it not that the secret proceedings of this dangerous man have long been as secretly watched? Ah!" sneered Father d'Aigrigny, with a smile of irony and triumph, "you wish to be a second Sixtus V., do you? And not content with this audacious pretension, you mean, if successful, to absorb our Company in the Papacy, even as the Sultan has absorbed the Janissaries. Ah, you would make *us* your stepping-stone to power! And you have thought to humiliate and crush me with your insolent disdain! But patience, patience: the day of retribution approaches. I alone am the depositary of our General's will. Father Cabocchini himself does not know that. The fate of Rodin is in my hands. Oh! it will not be what he expects. In this Remepont affair (which, I must needs confess, he has managed admirably) he thinks to outwit us all and to work only for himself. But to-morrow —"

Father d'Aigrigny was suddenly disturbed in these agreeable reflections. He heard the door of the next room open, and, as he turned round to see who was coming, the door of the apartment in which he was turned upon its hinges.

Father d'Aigrigny started with surprise, and became almost purple.

Marshal Simon stood before him. And, behind the marshal, in the shadow of the door, Father d'Aigrigny perceived the cadaverous face of Rodin.

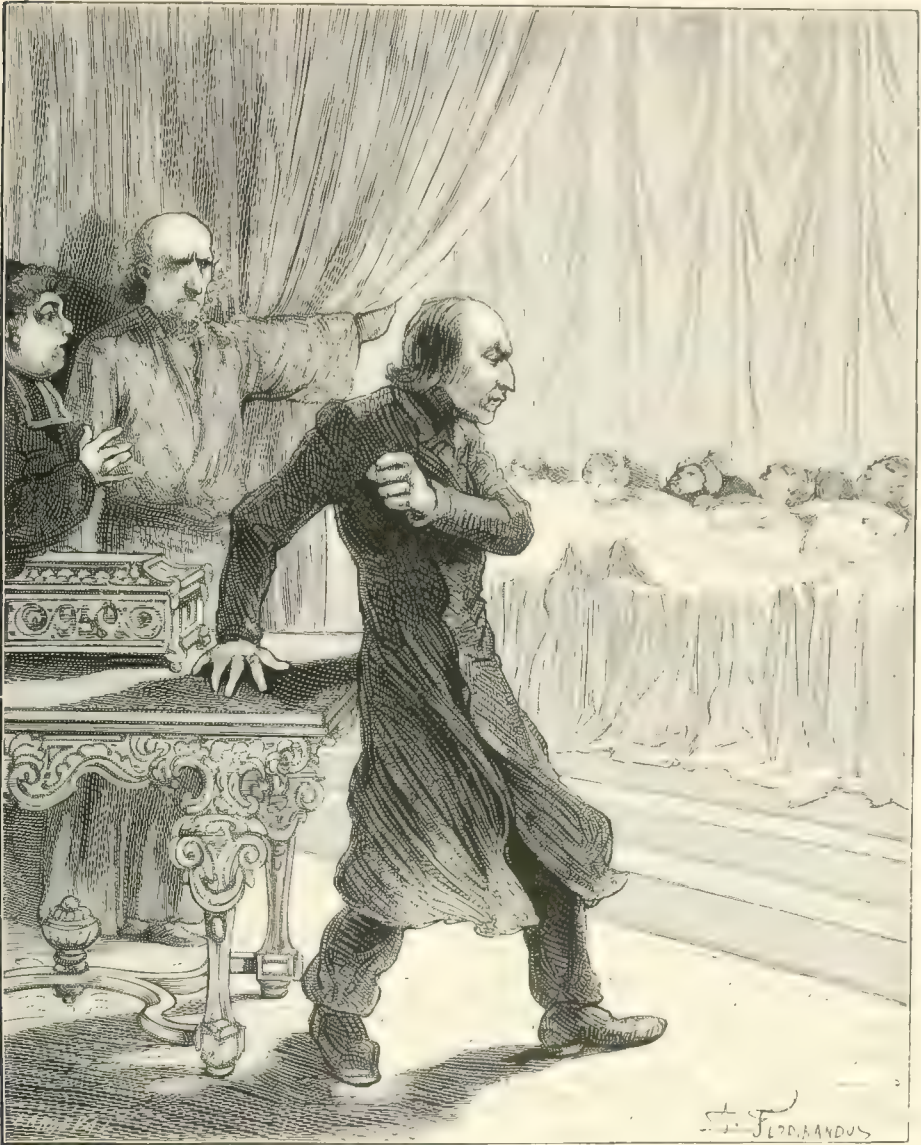
The latter cast on him one glance of diabolical delight, and instantly disappeared. The door was again closed, and Father d'Aigrigny and Marshal Simon were left alone together.

The father of Rose and Blanche was hardly recognizable. His gray hair had become completely white. His pale, thin face had not been shaved for some days. His hollow eyes were bloodshot and restless, and had in them something wild and haggard. He was wrapped in a large cloak, and his black cravat was tied loosely about his neck. In withdrawing from the apartment, Rodin had (as if by inadvertence) doubled-locked the door on the outside.

When he was alone with the Jesuit, the marshal threw back his

cloak from his shoulders, and Father d'Aigrigny could see two naked swords, stuck through a silk handkerchief which served him as a belt.

Father d'Aigrigny understood it all. He remembered how, a few



days before, Rodin had obstinately pressed him to say what he would do if the marshal were to strike him in the face. There could be now no doubt that he, who thought to have held the fate of Rodin in his hands, had been brought by the latter into a fearful peril; for he knew

that, the two outer rooms being closed, there was no possibility of making himself heard, and that the high walls of the garden only bordered upon some vacant lots. The first thought which occurred to him, one by no means destitute of probability, was that Rodin, either by his agents at Rome or by his own incredible penetration, had learned that his fate depended on Father d'Aigrigny, and hoped therefore to get rid of him by delivering him over to the inexorable vengeance of the father of Rose and Blanche.

Without speaking a word the marshal unbound the handkerchief from his waist, laid the two swords upon the table, and, folding his arms upon his breast, advanced slowly toward Father d'Aigrigny. Thus these two men, who through life had pursued each other with implacable hatred, at length met face to face — they, who had fought in hostile armies, and measured swords in single combat, and one of whom now came to seek vengeance for the death of his children.

As the marshal approached, Father d'Aigrigny rose from his seat. He wore that day a black cassock, which rendered still more visible the pale hue which had now succeeded to the sudden flush on his cheek. For a few seconds the two men stood face to face without speaking. The marshal was terrific in his paternal despair. His calmness, inexorable as fate, was more impressive than the most furious burst of anger.

"My children are dead," said he at last, in a slow and hollow tone. "I come to kill you."

"Sir," cried Father d'Aigrigny, "listen to me. Do not believe —"

"I must kill you," resumed the marshal, interrupting the Jesuit; "your hate followed my wife into exile, where she perished. You and your accomplices sent my children to certain death. For twenty years you have been my evil genius. I must have your life, and I will have it."

"My life belongs, first, to God," answered Father d'Aigrigny piteously, "and then to who likes to take it."

"We will fight to the death in this room," said the marshal; "and, as I have to avenge my wife and children, I am tranquil as to the result."

"Sir," answered Father d'Aigrigny, "you forget that my profession forbids me to fight. Once I accepted your challenge — but my position is changed since then."

"Ah!" said the marshal, with a bitter smile; "you refuse to fight because you are a priest?"

"Yes, sir; because I am a priest."

"So that, because he is a priest, a wretch like you may commit any crime, any baseness, under shelter of his black gown?"

"I do not understand a word of your accusations. In any case, the

law is open," said Father d'Aigrigny, biting his pale lips, for he felt deeply the insult offered by the marshal; "if you have anything to complain of, appeal to that law, before which all are equal."

Marshal Simon shrugged his shoulders in angry disdain.

"Your crimes escape the law — and, could it even reach you, that would not satisfy my vengeance, after all the evil you have done me, after all you have taken from me," said the marshal; and, at the memory of his children, his voice slightly trembled; but he soon proceeded, with terrible calmness: "You must feel that I now only live for vengeance. And I must have such revenge as is worth the seeking — I must have your coward's heart palpitating on the point of my sword. Our last duel was play; this will be earnest. Oh, you shall see."

The marshal walked up to the table, where he had laid the two swords. Father d'Aigrigny needed all his resolution to restrain himself. The implacable hate which he had always felt for Marshal Simon, added to these insults, filled him with savage ardor. Yet he answered, in a tone that was still calm:

"For the last time, sir, I repeat to you that my profession forbids me to fight."

"Then you refuse?" said the marshal, turning abruptly toward him.

"I refuse."

"Positively?"

"Positively. Nothing on earth should force me to it."

"Nothing?"

"No, sir; nothing."

"We shall see," said the marshal, as his hand fell with its full force on the cheek of Father d'Aigrigny.

The Jesuit uttered a cry of fury; all his blood rushed to his face, so roughly handled; the courage of the man (for he was brave), his ancient military ardor, carried him away; his eyes sparkled, and, with teeth firmly set, and clenched fists, he advanced toward the marshal, exclaiming:

"The swords! the swords!"

But suddenly remembering the appearance of Rodin, and the interest which the latter had in bringing about this rencounter, he determined to avoid the diabolical snare laid by his former *socius*, and so gathered sufficient resolution to restrain his terrible resentment.

To his passing fury succeeded a calm full of contrition; and wishing to play his part out to the end, he knelt down, and, bowing his head and beating his bosom, repeated:

"Forgive me, Lord, for yielding to a movement of rage! and, above all, forgive him who has injured me!"

In spite of his apparent resignation the Jesuit's voice was greatly agitated. He seemed to feel a hot iron upon his cheek, for never before in his life, whether as a soldier or a priest, had he suffered such an insult. He had thrown himself upon his knees, partly from religious mummary and partly to avoid the gaze of the marshal, fearing that were he to meet his eye he should not be able to answer for himself, but give way to his impetuous feelings. On seeing the Jesuit kneel down, and on hearing his hypocritical invocation, the marshal, whose sword was in his hand, shook with indignation.

"Stand up, scoundrel!" he said, "stand up, wretch!"

And he spurned the Jesuit with his boot.

At this new insult Father d'Aigrigny leaped up as if he had been moved by steel springs. It was too much; he could bear no more. Blinded with rage, he rushed to the table, caught up the other sword, and exclaimed, grinding his teeth together:

"Ah! you will have blood. Well, then, it shall be yours—if possible!"

And the Jesuit, still in all the vigor of manhood, his face purple, his large gray eyes sparkling with hate, fell upon his guard with the ease and skill of a finished swordsman.

"At last!" cried the marshal, as their blades were about to cross.

But once more reflection came to damp the fire of the Jesuit. He remembered how this hazardous duel would gratify the wishes of Rodin, whose fate was in his hands, and whom he hated perhaps even more than the marshal. Therefore, in spite of the fury which possessed him, in spite of his secret hope to conquer in this combat, so strong and healthy did he feel himself, and so fatal had been the effects of grief on the constitution of Marshal Simon, he succeeded in mastering his rage, and, to the amazement of the marshal, dropped the point of his sword, exclaiming:

"I am a minister of the Lord and must not shed blood. Forgive me, Heaven! and, oh! forgive my brother also."

Then, placing the blade beneath his heel, he drew the hilt suddenly toward him, and broke the weapon into two pieces.

The duel was no longer possible.

Father d'Aigrigny had put it out of his own power to yield to a new burst of violence, of which he saw the imminent danger. Marshal Simon remained for an instant mute and motionless with surprise and indignation, for he also saw that the duel was now impossible. But, suddenly, imitating the Jesuit, the marshal placed his blade also under his heel, broke it in half, and picking up the pointed end, about eighteen inches in length, tore off his black silk cravat, rolled it round the broken part so as to form a handle, and said to Father d'Aigrigny:

"Then we will fight with daggers."

Struck with this mixture of coolness and ferocity, the Jesuit exclaimed:

"Is this then a demon of hell?"

"No; it is a father, whose children have been murdered," said the marshal in a hollow voice, while he fitted the blade to his hand, and a tear stood in the eye that instantly after became fierce and ardent.

The Jesuit saw that tear. There was in this mixture of vindictive rage and paternal grief something so awful, and yet so sacred, that for the first time in his life Father d'Aigrigny felt fear—cowardly, ignoble fear—fear for his own safety. While a combat with swords was in question, in which skill, agility, and experience are such powerful auxiliaries to courage, his only difficulty had been to repress the ardor of his hate—but when he thought of the combat proposed, body to body, face to face, heart to heart, he trembled, grew pale, and exclaimed:

"A butchery with knives?—never!"

His countenance and the accent betrayed his alarm, so that the marshal himself was struck with it, and fearing to lose his revenge, he cried:

"After all, he is a coward! The wretch had only the courage or the vanity of a fencer. This pitiful renegade—this traitor to his country—whom I have cuffed, kicked—yes, kicked, most noble marquis!—shame of your ancient house—disgrace to the rank of gentleman, old or new. Ah! it is not hypocrisy, it is not calculation, as I at first thought—it is fear. You need the noise of war and the eyes of spectators to give you courage——"

"Sir, have a care!" said Father d'Aigrigny, stammering through his clenched teeth, for rage and hate now made him forget his fears.

"Must I then spit on you, to make the little blood you have left rise to your face?" cried the exasperated marshal.

"Oh! this is too much! too much!" said the Jesuit, seizing the pointed piece of the blade that lay at his feet.

"It is not enough," said the marshal, panting for breath. "There, Judas!" and he spat in his face.

"If you will not fight now," added the marshal, "I will beat you like a dog, base child-murderer!"

On receiving the uttermost insult which can be offered to an already insulted man, Father d'Aigrigny lost all his presence of mind, forgot his interests, his resolutions, his fears, forgot even Rodin,—felt only the frenzied ardor of revenge,—and, recovering his courage, rejoiced in the prospect of a close struggle, in which his superior strength promised success over the enfeebled frame of the marshal—for, in this kind of

brutal and savage combat, physical strength offers an immense advantage.

In an instant Father d'Aigrigny had rolled his handkerchief round the broken blade, and rushed upon Marshal Simon, who received the shock with intrepidity. For the short time that this unequal struggle lasted—unequal, for the marshal had since some days been a prey to a devouring fever, which had undermined his strength—the two combatants, mute in their fury, uttered not a word or a cry. Had any one been present at this horrible scene, it would have been impossible for him to tell how they dealt their blows. He would have seen two heads—frightful, livid, convulsed—rising, falling, now here, now there—arms, now stiff as bars of iron, and now twisting like serpents; and, in the midst of the undulations of the blue coat of the marshal and the black cassock of the Jesuit, from time to time the sudden gleam of the steel. He would have heard only a dull stamping, and now and then a deep breath.

In about two minutes at most the two adversaries fell, and rolled one over the other. One of them—Father d'Aigrigny—contrived to disengage himself with a violent effort, and to rise upon his knees. His arms fell powerless by his side, and then the dying voice of the marshal murmured:

“My children! Dagobert!”

“I have killed him,” said Father d'Aigrigny, in a weak voice; “but I feel—that I am wounded—to death.”

Leaning with one hand on the ground, the Jesuit pressed the other to his bosom. His black cassock was pierced through and through, but the blades which had served for the combat being triangular and very sharp, the blood, instead of issuing from the wounds, was flowing inward.

“Oh, I die—I choke,” said Father d'Aigrigny, whose features were already changing with the approach of death.

At this moment the key turned twice in the door. Rodin appeared on the threshold, and thrusting in his head, he said in a humble and discreet voice:

“May I come in?”

At this dreadful irony, Father d'Aigrigny strove to rise and rush upon Rodin; but he fell back exhausted; the blood was choking him.

“Monster of hell!” he muttered, casting on Rodin a terrible glance of rage and agony. “Thou art the cause of my death.”

“I always told you, my dear father, that your old military habits would be fatal to you,” answered Rodin, with a frightful smile. “Only a few days ago I gave you warning, and advised you to take a blow

patiently from this old swordsman — who seems to have done with that work forever, which is well — for the Scripture says: ‘All they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.’ And then this Marshal Simon might have had some claim on his daughters’ inheritance. And between ourselves, my dear father, what was I to do? It was necessary to sacrifice you for the common interest; the rather, that I well knew what you had in pickle for me to-morrow. But I am not so easily caught napping.”

“Before I die,” said Father d’Aigrigny, in a failing voice, “I will unmask you.”

“Oh, no, you will not,” said Rodin, shaking his head with a knowing air; “I alone, if you please, will receive your last confession.”

“Oh! this is horrible,” moaned Father d’Aigrigny, whose eyes were closing. “May God have mercy on me, if it is not too late. Alas! at this awful moment, I feel that I have been a great sinner ——”

“And, above all, a great fool,” said Rodin, shrugging his shoulders, and watching with cold disdain the dying moments of his accomplice.

Father d’Aigrigny had now but a few minutes more to live. Rodin perceived it, and said:

“It is time to call for help.”

And the Jesuit ran, with an air of alarm and consternation, into the court-yard of the house.

Others came at his cries; but, as he had promised, Rodin had only quitted Father d’Aigrigny as the latter had breathed his last sigh.

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That evening, alone in his chamber, by the glimmer of a little lamp, Rodin sat plunged in a sort of ecstatic contemplation, before the print representing Sixtus V. The great house-clock struck twelve. At the last stroke, Rodin drew himself up in all the savage majesty of his infernal triumph, and exclaimed:

“This is the 1st of June. There are no more Renneponts. Methinks I hear the hour from the clock of St. Peter’s at Rome striking.”

CHAPTER LXIII

A MESSAGE

WHILE Rodin sat plunged in ambitious reverie, contemplating the portrait of Sixtus V., good little Father Caboccini, whose warm embraces had so much irritated the first-mentioned personage, went secretly to Faringhea, to deliver to him a fragment of an ivory crucifix, and said to him, with his usual air of jovial good-nature:

"His Excellency Cardinal Malipieri, on my departure from Rome, charged me to give you this only on the 31st of May."

The half-caste, who was seldom affected by anything, started abruptly, almost with an expression of pain. His face darkened, and bending upon the little father a piercing look, he said to him:

"You were to add something."

"True," replied Father Caboccini; "the words I was to add are these: 'There is many a slip 'twixt the cup and the lip.'"

"It is well," said the other.

Heaving a deep sigh, he joined the fragment of the ivory crucifix to a piece already in his possession; it fitted exactly.

Father Caboccini looked at him with curiosity, for the cardinal had only told him to deliver the ivory fragment to Faringhea, and to repeat the above words. Being somewhat mystified with all this, the reverend father said to the half-caste:

"What are you going to do with that crucifix?"

"Nothing," said Faringhea, still absorbed in painful thought.

"Nothing?" resumed the reverend father, in astonishment. "What, then, was the use of bringing it so far?"

Without satisfying his curiosity, Faringhea replied:

"At what hour to-morrow does Father Rodin go to the Rue Saint François?"

"Very early."

"Before leaving home, he will go to say prayers in the chapel?"



MY HEART IS LIFTED TO GOD WITH A SENTIMENT OF INEFFABLE GRATITUDE.

"Yes, according to the habit of our reverend fathers."

"You sleep near him?"

"Being his *socius*, I occupy the room next to his."

"It is possible," said Faringhea after a moment's silence, "that the reverend father, full of the great interests which occupy his mind, might forget to go to the chapel. In that case, pray remind him of this pious duty."

"I shall not fail."

"Pray do not fail," repeated Faringhea anxiously.

"Be satisfied," said the good little father; "I see that you take great interest in his salvation."

"Great interest."

"It is very praiseworthy in you. Continue as you have begun, and you may one day belong completely to our Company," said Father Caboccini affectionately.

"I am as yet but a poor auxiliary member," said Faringhea humbly; "but no one is more devoted to the Society, body and soul. Bowanee is nothing to it."

"Bowanee! Who is that, my good friend?"

"Bowanee makes corpses which rot in the ground. The Society makes corpses which walk about."

"Ah, yes! *Perinde ac cadaver*, they were the last words of our great saint, Ignatius de Loyola. But who is this Bowanee?"

"Bowanee is to the Society what a child is to a man," replied the Asiatic, with growing excitement. "Glory to the Company—glory! Were my father its enemy, I would kill my father. The man whose genius inspires me most with admiration, respect, and terror—were he its enemy, I would kill, in spite of all," said the half-caste, with an effort.

Then after a moment's silence, he looked full in Caboccini's face, and added:

"I say this, that you may report my words to Cardinal Malipieri, and beg him to mention them to ——"

Faringhea stopped short.

"To whom should the cardinal mention your words?" asked Caboccini.

"He knows," replied the half-caste abruptly. "Good-night!"

"Good-night, my friend! I can only approve of your excellent sentiments with regard to our Company. Alas! it is in want of energetic defenders, for there are said to be traitors in its bosom."

"For those," said Faringhea, "we must have no pity."

"Certainly," said the good little father; "we understand each other."

"Perhaps," said the half-caste. "Do not, at all events, forget to remind Father Rodin to go to chapel to-morrow morning."

"I will take care of that," said Father Caboccini.

The two men parted. On his return to the house, Caboccini learned that a courier, only arrived that night from Rome, had brought dispatches to Rodin.

CHAPTER LXIV

THE FIRST OF JUNE

THE chapel belonging to the house of the reverend fathers, in the Rue de Vaugirard, was gay and elegant. Large panes of stained glass admitted a mysterious light; the altar shone with gold and silver; and at the entrance of this little church, in an obscure corner beneath the organ-loft, was a font for holy water in sculptured marble.

It was close to this font, in a dark nook where he could hardly be seen, that Faringhea knelt down early on the 1st of June, as soon indeed as the chapel doors were opened. The half-caste was exceedingly sad. From time to time he started and sighed, as if agitated by a violent internal struggle. This wild, untamable being, possessed with the monomania of evil and destruction, felt, as may be imagined, a profound admiration for Rodin, who exercised over him a kind of magnetic fascination. The half-caste, almost a wild beast in human form, saw something supernatural in the infernal genius of Rodin. And the latter, too sagacious not to have discovered the savage devotion of this wretch, had made, as we have seen, good use of him in bringing about the tragical termination of the lives of Adrienne and Djalma.

But what excited to an incredible degree the admiration of Faringhea, was what he knew of the Society of Jesus. This immense occult power, which undermined the world by its subterraneous ramifications, and reached its ends by diabolical means, had inspired the half-caste with a wild enthusiasm. And if anything in the world surpassed his fanatical admiration for Rodin, it was his blind devotion to the Company of Ignatius de Loyola, which, as he said, could make corpses that walk about. Hid in the shadow of the organ-loft, Faringhea was reflecting deeply on these things, when footsteps were heard and Rodin entered the chapel, accompanied by his *socius*, the little one-eyed father.

Whether from absence of mind, or that the shadow of the organ-loft completely concealed the half-caste, Rodin dipped his fingers into

the font without perceiving Faringhea, who stood motionless as a statue, though a cold sweat streamed from his brow.

The prayer of Rodin was, as may be supposed, short; he was in haste to get to the Rue Saint François. After kneeling down with Father Cabocchini for a few seconds, he rose, bowed respectfully to the altar, and returned toward the door, followed by his *socius*.

At the moment Rodin approached the font, he perceived the tall figure of the half-caste standing out from the midst of the dark shadow; advancing a little, Faringhea bowed respectfully to Rodin, who said to him in a low voice:

“Come to me at two o’clock.”

So saying, Rodin stretched forth his hand to dip it into the holy water; but Faringhea spared him the trouble by offering him the sprinkling-brush, which generally stood in the font.

Pressing between his dirty fingers the damp hairs of the brush, which the half-caste held by the handle, Rodin wetted his thumb and forefinger, and, according to custom, traced the sign of the cross upon his forehead. Then, opening the door of the chapel, he went out, after again repeating to Faringhea:

“Come to me at two o’clock.”

Thinking he would also make use of the sprinkling-brush, which Faringhea, still motionless, held with a trembling hand, Father Cabocchini stretched out his fingers to reach it, when the half-breed, as if determined to confine his favors to Rodin, hastily withdrew the instrument. Deceived in his expectation, Father Cabocchini lost no time in following Rodin, whom he was not to leave that day for a single moment, and getting into a hackney-coach with him, set out for the Rue Saint François. It is impossible to describe the look which the half-breed fixed upon Rodin as the latter quitted the chapel.

Left alone in the sacred edifice, Faringhea sank upon the stones, half kneeling, half crouching, with his face buried in his hands. As the coach drew near the quarter of the Marais, in which was situated the house of Marius de Rennepont, a feverish agitation and the devouring impatience of triumph were visible on the countenance of Rodin. Two or three times he opened his pocket-book and read and arranged the different certificates of death of the various members of the Rennepont family; and from time to time he thrust his head anxiously from the coach-window, as if he had wished to hasten the slow progress of the vehicle.

The good little father, his *socius*, did not take his eye off Rodin, and his look had a strange and crafty expression. At last the coach entered the Rue Saint François and stopped before the iron-studded door of the

old house, which had been closed for a century and a half. Rodin sprang from the coach with the agility of a young man, and knocked violently at the door, while Father Caboccini, less light of foot, descended more prudently to the ground. No answer was returned to the loud knocking of Rodin.

Trembling with anxiety, he knocked again. This time, as he listened attentively, he heard slow steps approaching. They stopped at some distance from the door, which was not yet opened.

"It is keeping one upon red-hot coals," said Rodin, for he felt as if there was a burning fire in his chest.

He again shook the door violently, and began to gnaw his nails, according to his custom.

Suddenly the door opened, and Samuel, the Jew guardian, appeared beneath the porch.

The countenance of the old man expressed bitter grief. Upon his venerable cheeks were the traces of recent tears, which he strove to dry with his trembling hands, as he opened the door to Rodin.

"Who are you, gentlemen?" said Samuel.

"I am the bearer of a power of attorney from the Abbé Gabriel, the only living representative of the Rennepont family," answered Rodin hastily. "This gentleman is my secretary," added he, pointing to Father Caboccini, who bowed.

After looking attentively at Rodin, Samuel resumed:

"I recognize you, sir. Please to follow me."

And the old guardian advanced toward the house in the garden, making a sign to the two reverend fathers to follow.

"That confounded old man kept me so long at the door," said Rodin to his *socius*, "that I think I have caught a cold in consequence. My lips and throat are dried up, like parchment baked at the fire."

"Will you not take something, my dear good father? Suppose you were to ask this man for a glass of water," cried the little one-eyed priest, with tender solicitude.

"No, no," answered Rodin; "it is nothing. I am devoured by impatience. That is all."

Pale and desolate, Bathsheba, the wife of Samuel, was standing at the door of the apartment she occupied with her husband, in the building next the street. As the Jew passed before her, he said, in Hebrew:

"The curtains of the Hall of Mourning?"

"Are closed."

"And the iron casket?"

"Is prepared," answered Bathsheba, also in Hebrew.

After pronouncing these words, completely unintelligible to Rodin

and Cabocchini, Samuel and Bathsheba exchanged a bitter smile, notwithstanding the despair impressed on their countenances.

Ascending the steps, followed by the two reverend fathers, Samuel entered the vestibule of the house, in which a lamp was burning. Endowed with an excellent local memory, Rodin was about to take the direction of the Red Saloon, in which had been held the first convocation of the heirs, when Samuel stopped him, and said :

“It is not that way.”

Then, taking the lamp, he advanced toward a dark staircase, for the windows of the house had not been unbricked.

“But,” said Rodin, “the last time, we met in a saloon on the ground-floor.”

“To-day we must go higher,” answered Samuel, as he began slowly to ascend the stairs.

“Where to — higher?” said Rodin, following him.

“To the Hall of Mourning,” replied the Jew, and he continued to ascend.

“What is the Hall of Mourning?” resumed Rodin, in some surprise.

“A place of tears and death,” answered the Israelite; and he kept on ascending through the darkness, for the little lamp threw but a faint light around.

“But,” said Rodin, more and more astonished, and stopping short on the stairs, “why go to this place?”

“The money is there,” answered Samuel; and he went on.

“Oh! if the money is there, that alters the case,” replied Rodin; and he made haste to regain the few steps he had lost by stopping.

Samuel continued to ascend, and, at a turn of the staircase, the two Jesuits could see by the pale light of the little lamp, the profile of the old Israelite, in the space left between the iron balustrade and the wall, as he climbed on with difficulty above them. Rodin was struck with the expression of Samuel’s countenance. His black eyes, generally so calm, sparkled with ardor. His features, usually impressed with a mixture of sorrow, intelligence, and goodness, seemed to grow harsh and stern, and his thin lips wore a strange smile.

“It is not so very high,” whispered Rodin to Cabocchini, “and yet my legs ache, and I am quite out of breath. There is a strange throbbing too in my temples.”

In fact, Rodin breathed hard, and with difficulty. To this confidential communication, good little Father Cabocchini, in general so full of tender care for his colleague, made no answer. He seemed to be in deep thought.

“Will we soon be there?” said Rodin impatiently, to Samuel.

"We are there," replied the Israelite.

"And a good thing too," said Rodin.

"Very good," said the Jew.

Stopping in the midst of a corridor, he pointed with the hand in which he held the lamp to a large door from which streamed a faint light. In spite of his growing surprise, Rodin entered resolutely, followed by Father Caboccini and Samuel. The apartment in which these three personages now found themselves was very large. The daylight only entered from a belvedere in the roof, the four sides of which had been covered with leaden plates, each of which was pierced with seven holes, forming a cross.

Now, the light being only admitted through these holes, the obscurity would have been complete, had it not been for a lamp which burned on a large massive slab of black marble, fixed against one of the walls. One would have taken it for a funeral chamber, for it was all hung with black curtains fringed with white. There was no furniture, save the slab of black marble we have already mentioned. On this slab was an iron casket, of the manufacture of the seventeenth century, admirably adorned with open-work, like lace made of metal.

Addressing Rodin, who was wiping his forehead with his dirty handkerchief and looking round him with surprise, but not fear, Samuel said to him :

"The will of the testator, however strange it may appear, is sacred with me, and must be accomplished in all things."

"Certainly," said Rodin ; "but what are we to do here ?"

"You will know presently, sir. You are the representative of the only remaining heir of the Rennepont family, the Abbé Gabriel de Rennepont ?"

"Yes, sir, and here are my papers," replied Rodin.

"To save time," replied Samuel, "I will, previous to the arrival of the magistrate, go through the inventory of the securities contained in this casket, which I withdrew yesterday from the custody of the Bank of France."

"The securities are there ?" cried Rodin, advancing eagerly toward the casket.

"Yes, sir," replied Samuel, "as by the list. Your secretary will call them over, and I will produce each in turn. They can then be replaced in the casket, which I will deliver up to you in presence of the magistrate."

"All this seems perfectly correct," said Rodin.

Samuel delivered the list to Father Caboccini, and, approaching the casket, touched a spring which was not seen by Rodin. The heavy

lid flew open, and, while Father Caboccini read the names of the different securities, Samuel showed them to Rodin, who returned them to the old Jew, after a careful examination. This verification did not last long, for this immense fortune was all comprised, as we already know, in eight government securities, five hundred thousand francs in bank-notes, thirty-five thousand francs in gold, and two hundred and fifty francs in silver — making in all an amount of two hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs. When Rodin had counted the last of the five hundred bank-notes, of a thousand francs each, he said, as he returned them to Samuel: “It is quite right. *Two hundred and twelve millions one hundred and seventy-five thousand francs!*”

He was no doubt almost choked with joy, for he breathed with difficulty, his eyes closed, and he was obliged to lean upon Father Caboccini's arm, as he said to him in an altered voice:

“It is singular. I thought myself proof against all such emotions; but what I feel is extraordinary.”

The natural paleness of the Jesuit increased so much, and he seemed so much agitated with convulsive movements, that Father Caboccini exclaimed:

“My dear father, collect yourself; do not let success overcome you thus.”

While the little one-eyed man was attending to Rodin, Samuel carefully replaced the securities in the iron casket. Thanks to his unconquerable energy, and to the joy he felt at seeing himself so near the term of his labors, Rodin mastered this attack of weakness, and drawing himself up, calm and proud, he said to Caboccini:

“It is nothing. I did not survive the cholera to die of joy on the 1st of June.”

And, though still frightfully pale, the countenance of the Jesuit shone with audacious confidence. But now, when Rodin appeared to be quite recovered, Father Caboccini seemed suddenly transformed. Though short, fat, and one-eyed, his features assumed on the instant so firm, harsh, and commanding an expression, that Rodin recoiled a step as he looked at him. Then Father Caboccini, drawing a paper from his pocket, kissed it respectfully, glanced sternly at Rodin, and read as follows, in a severe and menacing tone:

“On receipt of the present rescript, the Reverend Father Rodin will deliver up all his powers to the Reverend Father Caboccini, who is alone commissioned, with the Reverend Father d'Aigrigny, to receive the inheritance of the Rennepont family, if, in His eternal justice, the Lord should restore this property, of which our Company has been wronged.

"Moreover, on receipt of the present rescript, the Reverend Father Rodin, in charge of a person to be named by the Reverend Father Caboccini, shall be conveyed to our house in the town of Laval, to be kept in strict seclusion in his cell until further orders."

Then Father Caboccini handed the rescript to Rodin, that the latter might read the signature of the General of the Company. Samuel, greatly interested by the scene, drew a few steps nearer, leaving the casket half open.

Suddenly Rodin burst into a loud laugh — a laugh of joy, contempt, and triumph, impossible to describe.

Father Caboccini looked at him with angry astonishment, when Rodin, growing still more imperious and haughty, and with an air of more sovereign disdain than ever, pushed aside the paper with the back of his dirty hand, and said :

"What is the date of that scribble?"

"The 11th of May," answered Father Caboccini, in amazement.

"Here is a brief that I received last night from Rome, under date of the 18th. It informs me that I am appointed GENERAL OF THE ORDER. Read!"

Father Caboccini took the paper, read it, and remained thunder-struck. Then, returning it humbly to Rodin, he respectfully bent his knee before him. Thus seemed the ambitious views of Rodin accomplished. In spite of the hatred and suspicion of that party of which Cardinal Malipieri was the representative and the chief, Rodin, by address and craft, audacity and persuasion, and in consequence of the high esteem in which his partisan at Rome held his rare capacity, had succeeded in deposing his General, and in procuring his own elevation to that eminent post. Now, according to his calculation, aided by the millions he was about to possess, it would be but one step from that post to the pontifical throne.

A mute witness of this scene, Samuel smiled also with an air of triumph, as he closed the casket by means of the spring known only to himself. That metallic sound recalled Rodin from the heights of his mad ambition to the realities of life, and he said to Samuel, in a sharp voice :

"You have heard? These millions must be delivered to me alone."

He extended his hands eagerly and impatiently toward the casket, as if he would have taken possession of it before the arrival of the magistrate. Then Samuel in his turn seemed transfigured, and folding his arms upon his breast, and drawing up his aged form to its full height, he assumed a threatening and imposing air.

His eyes flashed with indignation, and he said in a solemn tone :

"This fortune — at first the humble remains of the inheritance of the

most noble of men, whom the plots of the sons of Loyola drove to suicide — this fortune, which has since become royal in amount, thanks to the sacred probity of three generations of faithful servants — this fortune shall never be the reward of falsehood, hypocrisy, and murder. No! the eternal justice of heaven will not allow it."

"Of murder? What do you mean, sir?" asked Rodin boldly.

Samuel made no answer. He stamped his foot, and extended his arm slowly toward the extremity of the apartment.

Then Rodin and Father Cabocchini beheld an awful spectacle. The draperies on the wall were drawn aside, as if by an invisible hand.

Round a funeral vault, faintly illumined by the bluish light of a silver lamp, six dead bodies were ranged upon black biers, dressed in long black robes. They were:

Jacques Rennepont.

François Hardy.

Rose and Blanche Simon.

Adrienne and Djalma.

They appeared to be asleep. Their eyelids were closed, their hands crossed over their breasts.

Father Cabocchini, trembling in every limb, made the sign of the cross, and retreating to the opposite wall, buried his face in his hands. Rodin, on the contrary, with agitated countenance, staring eyes, and hair standing on end, yielding to an invincible attraction, advanced toward those inanimate forms. One would have said that these last of the Renneponts had only just expired. They seemed to be in the first hour of the eternal sleep.

"Behold those whom thou hast slain!" cried Samuel, in a voice broken with sobs. "Yea! your detestable plots caused their death — and, as they fell one by one, it was my pious care to obtain possession of their poor remains, that they may all repose in the same sepulcher. Oh! cursed — cursed — cursed be thou who hast killed them! But their spoils shall escape thy murderous hands."

Rodin, still drawn forward in spite of himself, had approached the funeral couch of Djalma. Surmounting his first alarm, the Jesuit, to assure himself that he was not the sport of a frightful dream, ventured to touch the hands of the Asiatic — and found that they were damp and pliant, though cold as ice.

The Jesuit drew back in horror. For some seconds he trembled convulsively. But, his first amazement over, reflection returned, and with reflection came that invincible energy, that infernal obstinacy of character, that gave him so much power. Steadying himself on his legs, drawing his hand across his brow, raising his head, moistening his lips

two or three times before he spoke,—for his throat and mouth grew ever drier and hotter, without his being able to explain the cause,—he succeeded in giving to his features an imperious and ironical expression, and turning toward Samuel, who wept in silence, he said to him in a hoarse, guttural voice:

“I need not show you the certificates of their death. There they are in person.”

And he pointed with his bony hand to the six dead bodies.

At these words of his General, Father Cabocchini again made the sign of the cross, as if he had seen a fiend.

“Oh, my God!” cried Samuel; “thou hast quite abandoned this man. With what a calm look he contemplates his victims!”

“Come, sir!” said Rodin, with a horrid smile; “this is a natural wax-work exhibition, that is all. My calmness proves my innocence—and we had best come at once to business. I have an appointment at two o’clock. So let us carry down this casket.”

He advanced toward the marble slab.

Seized with indignation and horror, Samuel threw himself before him, and, pressing with all his might on a knob in the lid of the casket,—a knob which yielded to the pressure,—he exclaimed:

“Since your infernal soul is incapable of remorse, it may perhaps be shaken by disappointed avarice.”

“What does he say?” cried Rodin. “What is he doing?”

“Look!” said Samuel, in his turn assuming an air of savage triumph. “I told you that the spoils of your victims should escape your murderous hands.”

Hardly had he uttered these words, before through the open-work of the iron casket rose a light cloud of smoke, and an odor as of burnt paper spread itself through the room. Rodin understood it instantly.

“Fire!” he exclaimed, as he rushed forward to seize the casket.

It had been made fast to the heavy marble slab.

“Yes, fire,” said Samuel. “In a few minutes, of that immense treasure there will remain nothing but ashes. And better so than it should belong to you and yours. This treasure is not mine, and it only remains for me to destroy it—since Gabriel de Rennepont will be faithful to the oath he has taken.”

“Help! water! water!” cried Rodin, as he covered the casket with his body, trying in vain to extinguish the flames, which, fanned by the current of air, now issued from the thousand apertures in the lid; but soon the intensity of the fire diminished, a few threads of bluish smoke alone mounted upward—and then all was extinct.

The work was done!

Breathless and faint, Rodin leaned against the marble slab. For the first time in his life he wept; large tears of rage rolled down his cadaverous cheeks. But suddenly dreadful pains, at first dull, but gradually augmenting in intensity, seized on him with so much fury, though he employed all his energy to struggle against them, that he fell on his knees, and pressing his two hands to his chest, murmured with an attempt to smile:

"It is nothing. Do not be alarmed. A few spasms—that is all. The treasure is destroyed—but I remain General of the Order. Oh! I suffer. What a furnace!" he added, writhing in agony. "Since I entered this cursed house I know not what ails me. If—I had not lived on roots—water—bread—which I go myself to buy—I should think—I was poisoned—for I triumph—and Cardinal Malipieri has long arms. Yes—I still triumph—for I will not die—this time no more than the other—I will not die!"

Then, as he stretched out his arms convulsively, he continued:

"It is fire that devours my entrails. No doubt they have tried to poison me. But when? But how?"

After another pause, Rodin again cried out in a stifled voice:

"Help! help me! You that stand looking on—like specters!—Help me, I say!"

Horror-struck at this dreadful agony, Samuel and Father Caboccini were unable to stir.

"Help!" repeated Rodin, in a tone of strangulation. "This poison is horrible. But how——"

Then, with a terrific cry of rage, as if a sudden idea had struck him, he exclaimed:

"Ha! Faringhea—this morning—the holy water—he knows such subtle poisons. Yes—it is he—he had an interview with Malipieri. The demon! Oh! it was well played. The Borgias are still the same. Oh! it is all over. I die. They will regret me, the fools! Oh! hell! hell! The Church knows not its loss—but I burn—help!"

They came to his assistance. Quick steps were heard upon the stairs, and Dr. Baleinier, followed by the Princess de Saint-Dizier, appeared at the entrance of the Hall of Mourning.

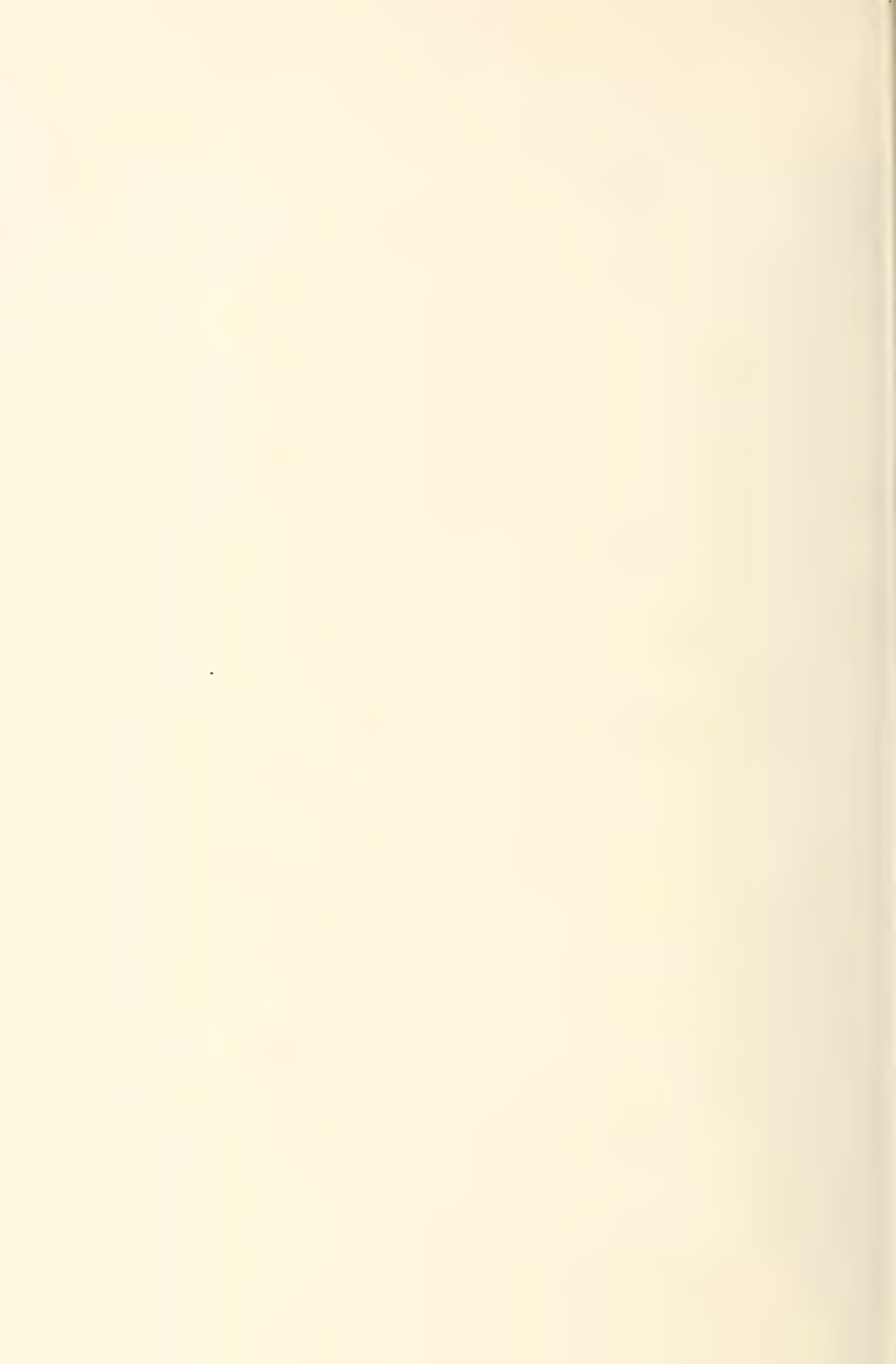
The princess had learned vaguely that morning of the death of Father d'Aigrigny, and had come to question Rodin upon the subject. When this woman, entering the room, suddenly saw the frightful spectacle that offered itself to her view—when she saw Rodin writhing in horrible agony, and, farther on, by the light of the sepulchral lamp, those six corpses—and amongst them her own niece and the two orphans whom she had sent to meet their death—she stood petrified with horror, and her reason was unable to withstand the shock.

She looked slowly round her, and then raised her arms on high and burst into a wild fit of laughter.

She had gone mad.

While Dr. Baleinier supported the head of Rodin, who expired in his arms, Faringhea appeared at the door; remaining in the shade, he cast a ferocious glance at the corpse of the Jesuit.

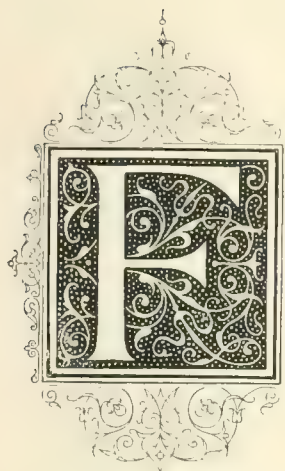
“He would have made himself the chief of the Company of Jesus, to destroy it,” said he. “With me the Company of Jesus stands in the Place of Bowanee. I have obeyed the cardinal!”



EPILOGUE

CHAPTER I

FOUR YEARS AFTER



FOUR years had elapsed since the events we have just related, when Gabriel de Rennepont wrote the following letter to Abbé Joseph Charpentier, curate of the Parish of Saint-Aubin, a hamlet of Sologne :

“ SPRINGWATER FARM, June 2, 1836.

“Intending to write to you yesterday, my dear Joseph, I seated myself at the little old black table that you will remember well. My window looks, you know, upon the farm-yard, and I can see all that takes place there.

“These are grave preliminaries, but I am coming to the point.

“I had just taken my seat at the table when, looking from the window, this is what I saw. You, my dear Joseph, who can draw so well, should have been there to have sketched the charming scene.

“The sun was sinking, the sky serene, the air warm and balmy with the breath of the hawthorn which, flowering by the side of a little rivulet, forms the edge which borders the yard. Under the large pear-tree, close to the wall of the barn, sat upon the stone bench my adopted father, Dagobert, that brave and honest soldier whom you love so much. He appeared thoughtful, his white head was bowed on his bosom; with absent mind he patted old *Spoilsport*, whose intelligent face was resting on his master's knees. By his side was his wife, my dear adopted mother, occupied with her sewing; and near them, on a stool, sat Angela, the wife of Agricola, nursing her last-born child; while the gentle Magdalen, with the eldest boy in her lap, was occupied in teaching him the letters of the alphabet.

“Agricola had just returned from the fields, and was beginning to unyoke his cattle, when, struck, like me, no doubt, with this picture, he stood gazing on it for a moment, with his hand still leaning on the yoke, beneath which bent submissive the broad foreheads of his two large black oxen.

"I cannot express to you, my friend, the enchanting repose of this picture, lighted by the last rays of the sun, here and there broken by the thick foliage. What various and touching types! The venerable face of the soldier; the good, loving countenance of my adopted mother; the fresh beauty of Angela, smiling on her little child; the soft melancholy of the hunchback, now and then pressing her lips to the fair, laughing cheek of Agricola's eldest son; and then Agricola himself, in his manly beauty, which seems to reflect so well the valor and honesty of his heart.

"Oh, my friend! in contemplating this assemblage of good, devoted, noble, and loving beings, so dear to each other, living retired in a little farm of our poor Sologne, my heart rose toward heaven with a feeling of ineffable gratitude. This peace of the family circle; this clear evening, with the perfume of the woods and wild flowers wafted on the breeze; this deep silence, only broken by the murmur of the neighboring rill, all affected me with one of those passing fits of vague and sweet emotion which one feels but cannot express. You well know it, my friend, who, in your solitary walks, in the midst of your immense plains of flowering heath, surrounded by forests of fir-trees, often feel your eyes grow moist, without being able to explain the cause of that sweet melancholy, which I, too, have often felt, during those glorious nights passed in the profound solitudes of America.

"But, alas! a painful incident disturbed the serenity of the picture. Suddenly I heard Dagobert's wife say to him:

"My dear — you are weeping!"

"At these words, Agricola, Angela, and Magdalen gathered round the soldier. Anxiety was visible upon every face. Then, as he raised his head abruptly, one could see two large tears trickle down his cheek to his white mustache.

"'It is nothing, my children,' said he, in a voice of emotion; 'it is nothing. Only to-day is the 1st of June — and this day four years —'

"He could not complete the sentence; and as he raised his hands to his eyes to brush away the tears, we saw that he held between his fingers a little bronze chain, with a medal suspended to it. That is his dearest relic. Four years ago, almost dying of despair at the loss of the two angels of whom I have so often spoken to you, my friend, he took from the neck of Marshal Simon, brought home dead from a fatal duel, this chain and medal which his children had so long worn. I went down instantly, as you may suppose, to endeavor to soothe the painful remembrances of this excellent man; gradually he grew calmer, and the evening was passed in a pious and quiet sadness.

"You cannot imagine, my friend, when I returned to my chamber, what cruel thoughts came to my mind as I recalled those past events, from which I generally turn away with fear and horror.

"Then I saw once more the victims of those terrible and mysterious plots, the awful depths of which have never been penetrated, thanks to the deaths of Father d'A. and Father R., and the incurable madness of Madame de St.-D., the three authors or accomplices of the dreadful deeds. The calamities occasioned by them are irreparable; for those who were thus sacrificed to a criminal ambition would have been the pride of humanity by the good they would have done. Ah, my friend! if you had known those noble hearts; if you had known the projects of splendid charity formed by that young lady, whose heart was so generous, whose mind so elevated, whose soul so great! On the eve of her death, as a kind of prelude to her magnificent designs, after a conversation, the subject of which I must keep secret even from you, she put into my hands a considerable sum, saying, with her usual grace and goodness:

"'I have been threatened with ruin, and it might perhaps come. What I now confide to you will at least be safe — safe for those who suffer. Give much — give freely — make as many happy hearts as you can. My happiness shall have a royal inauguration!'

"I do not know whether I ever told you, my friend, that, after those fatal events, seeing Dagobert and his wife reduced to misery, poor 'Mother Bunch' hardly able to earn a wretched subsistence, Agricola soon to become a father, and myself deprived of my curacy and suspended by my bishop for having given religious consolations to a Protestant and offered up prayers at the tomb of an unfortunate suicide — I considered myself justified in employing a small portion of the sum intrusted to me by Mademoiselle de Cardoville in the purchase of this farm in Dagobert's name.

"Yes, my friend, such is the origin of my fortune. The farmer to whom these few acres formerly belonged gave us the rudiments of our agricultural education, and common sense and the study of a few good practical books completed it. From an excellent workman Agricola has become an equally excellent husbandman; I have tried to imitate him, and have put my hand also to the plow: there is no derogation in it, for the labor which provides food for man is thrice hallowed, and it is truly to serve and glorify God to cultivate and enrich the earth He has created. Dagobert, when his first grief was a little appeased, seemed to gather new vigor from this healthy life of the fields; and, during his exile in Siberia, he had already learned to till the ground. Finally, my dear adopted mother and sister and Agricola's good wife have divided between them the household cares; and God has blessed this little colony of people, who, alas, have been sorely tried by misfortune, and who now only ask of toil and solitude a quiet, laborious, innocent life, and oblivion of great sorrows.

"Sometimes, in our winter evenings, you have been able to appreciate the delicate and charming mind of the gentle 'Mother Bunch,' the rare poetical imagination of Agricola, the tenderness of his mother, the good sense of his father, the exquisite natural grace of Angela. Tell me, my friend, was it possible to unite more elements of domestic happiness? What long evenings have we passed round the fire of crackling wood, reading, or commenting on a few immortal works, which always warm the heart, and enlarge the soul! What sweet talk have we had, prolonged far into the night! And then Agricola's pastorals, and the timid literary confidence of Magdalen! And the fresh, clear voice of Angela, joined to the deep, manly tones of Agricola, in songs of simple melody! And the old stories of Dagobert, so energetic and picturesque in their warlike spirit! And the adorable gayety of the children, in their sports with good old *Spidsport*, who rather lends himself to their play than takes part in it — for the faithful, intelligent creature seems always to be looking for somebody, as Dagobert says — and he is right. Yes, the dog also regrets those two angels, of whom he was the devoted guardian.

"Do not think, my friend, that our happiness makes us forgetful. No, no; not a day passes without our repeating, with pious and tender respect, those names so dear to our hearts. And these painful memories, hovering forever about us, give to our calm and happy existence that shade of mild seriousness which struck you so much.

"No doubt, my friend, this kind of life, bounded by the family circle, and not extending beyond, for the happiness or improvement of our brethren, may be set down as selfish; but, alas, we have not the means — and though the poor man always finds a place at our frugal table and shelter beneath our roof, we must renounce all great projects of fraternal action. The little revenue of our farm just suffices to supply our wants. Alas, when I think over it, notwithstanding a momentary regret, I cannot blame my resolution to keep faithfully my sacred oath, and to renounce that great inheritance, which, alas! had become immense by the death of my kindred. Yes, I believe I performed a duty when I begged the guardian of that treasure to reduce it to ashes rather than let it fall into the hands of people who would have made an execrable use of it, or to perjure myself by disputing a donation which I had granted freely, voluntarily, sincerely. And yet, when I picture to myself the realization of the magnificent views of my ancestor — an admirable Utopia, only possible with immense resources — and which Mademoiselle

de Cardoville hoped to carry into execution, with the aid of M. François Hardy, of Prince Djalma, of Marshal Simon and his daughters, and of myself — when I think of the dazzling focus of living forces which such an association would have been, and of the immense influence it might have had on the happiness of the whole human race — my indignation and horror, as an honest man and a Christian, are excited against that abominable Company, whose black plots nipped in their bud all those great hopes, which promised so much for futurity.

“What remains now of all these splendid projects? Seven tombs. For my grave also is dug in that mausoleum, which Samuel has erected on the site of the house in the Rue Neuve-Saint-François, and of which he remains the keeper — faithful to the end.

“I had written thus far, my friend, when I received your letter.

“So, after having forbidden you to see me, your bishop now orders that you shall cease to correspond with me.

“Your touching, painful regrets have deeply moved me, my friend. Often have we talked together of ecclesiastical discipline, and of the absolute power of the bishops over us, the poor working clergy, left to their mercy without aid or remedy. It is painful, but it is the law of the Church, my friend, and you have sworn to observe it. Submit as I have submitted. Every engagement is binding upon the man of honor.

“My poor, dear Joseph! would that you had the compensations that remained to me, after the rupture of ties that I so much value. But I know too well what you must feel — I cannot go on.

“I find it impossible to continue this letter; I might be bitter against those whose orders we are bound to respect.

“Since it must be so, this letter shall be my last. Farewell, my friend! farewell forever. My heart is almost broken.

“GABRIEL DE RENNEPONT.”

CHAPTER II

THE REDEMPTION

DAY was about to dawn. A rosy light, almost imperceptible, began to glimmer in the east; but the stars still shone, sparkling with radiance, upon the azure of the zenith. The birds awoke beneath the fresh foliage of the great woods, and, with isolated warblings, sang the prelude of their morning concert. A light mist rose from the high grass, bathed in nocturnal dew, while the calm and limpid waters of a vast lake reflected the whitening dawn in their deep blue mirror.

Everything promised one of those warm and joyous days that belong to the opening of summer.

Half-way up the slope of a hill, facing the east, a tuft of old, moss-grown willows, whose rugged bark disappeared beneath the climbing branches of wild honeysuckle and harebells, formed a natural harbor; and on their gnarled and enormous roots, covered with thick moss, were seated a man and a woman, whose white hair, deep wrinkles, and bending figures announced extreme old age.

And yet this woman had only lately been young and beautiful, with long black hair overshadowing her pale forehead.

And yet this man had, a short time ago, been still in the vigor of his age.

From the spot where this man and woman were reposing could be seen the valley, the lake, the woods, and, soaring above the woods, the blue summit of a high mountain, from behind which the sun was about to rise. This picture, half veiled by the pale transparency of the morning twilight, was pleasing, melancholy, and solemn.

"Oh, my sister!" said the old man to the woman, who was reposing with him beneath the rustic arbor formed by the tuft of willow-trees: "oh, my sister! how many times during the centuries in which the hand of the Lord carried us onward, and, separated from each other,

we traversed the world from pole to pole—how many times we have witnessed this awaking of nature with a sentiment of incurable grief! Alas! it was but another day of wandering—another useless day added to our life, since it brought death no nearer!”

“But now what happiness, oh, my brother! since the Lord has had mercy on us, and, with us, as with all other creatures, every returning day is a step nearer to the grave. Glory to him! yes, glory!”

“Glory to him, my sister! for since yesterday, when we again met, I feel that indescribable languor which announces the approach of death.”

“Like you, my brother, I feel my strength, already shaken, passing away in a sweet exhaustion. Doubtless the term of our life approaches. The wrath of the Lord is satisfied.”

“Alas, my sister! doubtless, also, the last of my doomed race will, at the same time, complete our redemption by his death; for the will of Heaven is manifest that I can only be pardoned when the last of my family shall have disappeared from the face of the earth. To him, holiest amongst the holiest, was reserved the favor of accomplishing this end—he who has done so much for the salvation of his brethren!”

“Oh, yes, my brother! he who has suffered so much, and without complaining, drunk to the dregs the bitter cup of woe—he, the minister of the Lord, who has been his Master’s image upon earth—he was fitted for the last instrument of this redemption!”

“Yes, for I feel, my sister, that at this hour the last of my race, touching victim of slow persecution, is on the point of resigning his angelic soul to God. Thus, even to the end, have I been fatal to my doomed family. Lord, if thy mercy is great, thy anger is great likewise!”

“Courage and hope, my brother! Think how after the expiation cometh pardon, and pardon is followed by a blessing. The Lord punished in you and your posterity the artisan rendered wicked by misfortune and injustice. He said to you: ‘Go on! without truce or rest, and your labor shall be vain; and every evening, throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer to the end of your eternal course!’ And so for centuries, men without pity have said to the artisan: ‘Work! work! work! without truce or rest, and your labor shall be fruitful for all others, but fruitless for yourself; and every evening, throwing yourself on the hard ground, you shall be no nearer to happiness and repose: and your wages shall only suffice to keep you alive in pain, privation, and poverty!’”

“Alas! alas! will it be always thus?”

“No, no, my brother! And instead of weeping over your lost race, rejoice for them, since their death was needed for your redemption, and in redeeming you Heaven will redeem the artisan, cursed and feared by

those who have laid on him the iron yoke. Yes, my brother! the time draweth nigh. Heaven's mercy will not stop with us alone. Yes, I tell you, in us will be rescued both the WOMAN and the SLAVE of these



modern ages. The trial has been hard, brother; it has lasted throughout eighteen centuries; but it will last no longer. Look, my brother! see that rosy light, there in the east, gradually spreading over the firma-

ment! Thus will rise the sun of the new emancipation — peaceful, holy, great, salutary, fruitful, filling the world with light and vivifying heat, like the day-star that will soon appear in heaven!”

“Yes, yes, my sister, I feel it. Your words are prophetic. We shall close our heavy eyes just as we see the aurora of the day of deliverance — a fair, a splendid day, like that which is about to dawn. Henceforth I will only shed tears of pride and glory for those of my race who have died the martyrs of humanity, sacrificed by humanity’s eternal enemies — for the true ancestors of the sacrilegious wretches who blaspheme the name of Jesus by giving it to their Company, were the false Scribes and Pharisees whom the Saviour cursed! Yes! glory to the descendants of my family, who have been the last martyrs offered up by the accomplices of all slavery and all despotism, the pitiless enemies of those who wish to think, and not to suffer in silence — of those that would fain enjoy, as children of Heaven, the gifts which the Creator has bestowed upon all the human family. Yes, the day approaches — the end of the reign of our modern Pharisees — the false priests, who lend their sacrilegious aid to the merciless selfishness of the strong against the weak, by daring to maintain, in the face of the exhaustless treasures of the creation, that God has made man for tears, and sorrow, and suffering — the false priests who are the agents of all oppression, and would bow to the earth in brutish and hopeless humiliation the brow of every creature. No, no! let man lift his head proudly! God made him to be noble and intelligent, free and happy.”

“Oh, my brother! your words also are prophetic. Yes, yes! the dawn of that bright day approaches, even as the dawn of the natural day which, by the merey of God, will be our last on earth.”

“The last, my sister; for a strange weakness creeps over me, all matter seems dissolving in me, and my soul aspires to mount to heaven.”

“Mine eyes are growing dim, brother; I can scarcely see that light in the east, which lately appeared so red.”

“Sister! it is through a confused vapor that I now see the valley — the lake — the woods. My strength fails me.”

“Blessed be God, brother! The moment of eternal rest is at hand.”

“Yes, it comes, my sister! The sweetness of the everlasting sleep takes possession of my senses.”

“Oh, happiness! I am dying.”

“These eyes are closing, sister!”

“We are then forgiven!”

“Forgiven!”

“Oh, my brother! May this Divine redemption extend to all those who suffer upon the earth!”

“Die in peace, my sister! The great day has dawned—the sun is rising—behold!”

“Blessed be God!”

“Blessed be God!”

And at the moment when those two voices ceased forever, the sun rose, radiant and dazzling, and deluged the valley with its beams.

CONCLUSION



OUR task is accomplished; our work is done.

We know how incomplete, how imperfect is this book. We know how deficient it is in style, conception, plot.

But we think we have the right to say of this work that it is honest, conscientious, and sincere.

In the course of its publication many hateful, unjust, implacable attacks have pursued it; many severe, harsh, passionate, but still honest criticisms have assailed it.

The violent, hateful, unjust, implacable attacks have much diverted us, for the very reason—we confess it in all humility—that they were launched at our heads from certain episcopal thrones. These pleasant furies, these laughable anathemas, which have now thundered against us for more than a year, are too diverting to be odious. It is simply an excellent clerical comedy.

We have enjoyed this comedy; we have delighted in it. It remains for us to express our sincere gratitude to those who, like the divine Molière, are at once the authors and the actors.

As for the criticisms, however bitter and violent, we accept them the more readily, with regard to the literary portion of our work, that we have often tried to profit by their advice, though given perhaps somewhat harshly. Our modest deference to the opinions of persons more judicious and correct than sympathetic or friendly, has, we fear, rather annoyed those persons themselves. We regret it the more that we have profited by their observations, and it is always unpleasant to offend those who oblige us—even with the intention of disobliging us.

A few words as to accusations of another and more serious kind.

They accuse us of appealing to the passions of the populace, by pointing out to public animadversion all the members of the Company of Jesus. This is our answer:

It is now beyond doubt and incontestable, proved by all sorts of texts, from the time of Pascal to our own day, that the theological works of the most accredited members of the Society of Jesus contain the excuse or the justification of

Robbery, adultery, rape, and murder.

It is equally proved that impure and disgusting works, signed by reverend fathers of the Company, have been put into the hands of our young seminarists.

This last fact, attested by the scrupulous examination of texts, has been solemnly confirmed by the discourse, so full of lofty sentiments, high reason, grave and generous eloquence, pronounced by Advocate-General Dupaty in the affair of the Honorable M. Busch of Strasburg.

How, then, have we proceeded? We have imagined certain members of the Company of Jesus, inspired by the detestable principles of their *classical theologians*, acting according to the spirit of those abominable books; we have put them in action, movement, in relief; we have given flesh and blood to those detestable doctrines—neither more nor less.

Have we pretended that all the members of the Society have the black talent, the audacity, or the villainy to employ these dangerous weapons contained in the gloomy arsenal of their order? Not so. What we have attacked is the abominable spirit of their *constitutions* and the books of their classical theology.

Need we add that, since popes, and kings, and nations, and only quite lately France herself, have condemned the horrible doctrines of this company by expelling its members and dispersing their congregations, we have only offered, under a new form, ideas and convictions which have long been sanctioned by public notoriety?

Having said this, let us proceed.

We have been charged, in the second place, with exciting the rancor of the poor against the rich, and envenoming the envy caused in the minds of the unfortunate by the sight of the splendors of opulence.

To this we answer that we have, on the contrary, attempted to personify, in the creation of Adrienne de Cardoville, that portion of the aristocracy, both by birth and fortune, who, from a noble and generous impulse, as well as from knowledge of the past and foresight of the future, extend or ought to extend the hand of benevolence and brotherhood to all who suffer, to all who preserve integrity in misfortune, to all who are dignified by labor. Is it to sow seeds of division between the rich and poor, to paint Adrienne de Cardoville, the beautiful and rich patrician, calling La Mayeux her sister, and treating as a sister the poor, miserable, deformed seamstress?

Is it to irritate the workman against his employer, to describe M. François Hardy as laying the first foundations of a common dwelling-house?

No. We have, on the contrary, attempted a work of conciliation

between the two classes placed at the two extremities of the social ladder; for, three years ago, we wrote these words:

IF THE RICH KNEW!

We have said, and we repeat, that there exist frightful and innumerable forms of misery, and that the people, more and more enlightened as to its rights, but still calm, patient, resigned, demands of those who govern it the amelioration of its deplorable position, made every day worse by anarchy and merciless competition, which extends through every branch of industry.

We have said, and we repeat, that the honest and industrious man has a *right* to such work as will supply him with sufficient wages.

May we be allowed to sum up in a few words the questions we have raised in this book?

We have tried to prove the cruel insufficiency of the wages of women, and the horrible consequences of that insufficiency.

We have asked for new securities against the facility with which any person may be shut up in a mad-house.

We have demanded that the artisan should enjoy the benefit of the law with regard to *bail*, which, being fixed at five hundred francs, it is impossible for him to avail himself of, though liberty is of more importance to him than to others, since his family are often entirely dependent on his labors, which he cannot pursue in prison. We have proposed an amount of sixty or eighty francs — at all events not exceeding the average of a month's wages.

Finally we have endeavored to make practicable the organization of a common dwelling-house for workmen, and have shown, we venture to hope, some immense advantages which, even at the present rate of wages, insufficient as they are, would be found in the principle of association and community, if means were afforded to the working classes to make the experiment.

And that this might not seem a mere Utopia, we have proved by figures that the *speculator* might perform a humane and generous action, and yet make five per cent. on his money, by the establishment of such common dwelling-houses.

A humane, a generous speculation, which we recommend to the attention of our Municipal Council, always attentive to the wants of the people of Paris. The city is rich, and might place out capital to advantage in establishing in each quarter of the metropolis a model of such a common dwelling-house. The hope of admission, at a low charge, would excite a praiseworthy emulation amongst the working-classes, and they would there learn the first elements of the fruitful science of association.

One word more of thanks, from the bottom of our heart, to the friends, known and unknown, whose kindness and encouragement and sympathy have constantly followed us, and afforded us such efficient aid in the prosecution of our long task.

And yet one other word of respectful and unalterable gratitude to our friends in Belgium and Switzerland, who have vouchsafed us public testimonies of their sympathy, of which we shall always be proud, and which have been amongst our sweetest rewards!

To M. C—— P——.

To you, my friend, I dedicated this book. To inscribe it with your name was to assume an engagement that, in the absence of talent, it should be at least conscientious, sincere, and of a salutary influence, however limited. My object is attained. Some select hearts, like yours, my friend, have put into practice the legitimate association of labor, capital, and intelligence, and have already granted to their workmen a proportionate share in the profits of their industry. Others have laid the foundations of common dwelling-houses, and one of the chief capitalists of Hambarg has favored me with his views respecting an establishment of this kind on the most gigantic scale.

As for the dispersion of the members of the Company of Jesus, I have taken less part in it than other enemies of the detestable doctrines of Loyola, whose influence and authority were far greater than mine.

Adieu, my friend. I could have wished this work more worthy of you; but you are indulgent, and will at least give me credit for the intentions which dictated it.

Believe me,

Yours truly,

EUGENE SUE.

Paris, 25th August, 1845.



